



Regional Transit Authority

# Commuter Rail Demonstration Project

Draft Final Report

June 9, 1995



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**With the cooperation of:**

Amtrak  
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GO Transit Toronto, Ontario  
George Lucas  
Metro Transit  
Pierce Transit  
Union Pacific Railroad

**This report was written by Henry M. Aronson, *TRY RAIL!* Project Director.**



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# Executive summary

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This report documents the experience of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in planning and operating the Commuter Rail Demonstration Project (CRDP), or *TRY RAIL!* in the Tacoma–Seattle–Everett corridor between June, 1994 and March, 1995.

## ***TRY RAIL!* services**

The RTA's *TRY RAIL!* service was operated by the Burlington Northern Railroad (BN) with equipment leased from the Government of Ontario Transit Authority (GO) and maintained by the National Passenger Service Corporation (Amtrak). The demonstration served more than 35,000 passengers between January 28 and March 16, 1995. *TRY RAIL!* services included:

- 76 weekday rush hour commuter trips
- 32 midweek and weekend excursion trips
- transportation to and from nine Seattle Supersonics basketball games played in Tacoma, Washington.

## **Purpose of CRDP**

The CRDP was implemented to provide:

- automobile commuters on the I-5 corridor with a transportation alternative to highway gridlock
- the RTA and freight railroads with an opportunity to evaluate the issues raised by the introduction of a time-sensitive passenger rail service into the heavily traveled Tacoma–Seattle–Everett freight rail corridor
- local freight-oriented railroad personnel with experience in passenger service
- the RTA with an opportunity to evaluate the issues raised by integrating commuter rail services and facilities into local communities and with services provided by local transit providers
- customers and local citizens with information about commuter rail services.

## **Funding**

The *TRY RAIL!* project was funded with:

- \$1.5 million from the proceeds of a settlement of antitrust litigation initiated by the state Attorney General against several oil companies



- a grant of up to \$1 million from the U.S. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in funds previously authorized for commuter rail implementation in the Tacoma-Seattle-Everett corridor
- \$200,000 from the RTA for initial feasibility studies and planning
- in-kind assistance and support from local transit agencies served by *TRY RAIL!*, the RTA staff, volunteers, and individual and corporate supporters of the project.

The final budget for *TRY RAIL!* direct expenditures was \$2.3 million.

## Planning

The lead time between the initial planning and inauguration of *TRY RAIL!* service was seven months. During that period the RTA, a newly formed special-purpose government:

- developed a schedule of services and an operations plan
- secured funding for the demonstration
- located and negotiated leases for equipment
- entered into agreements for platform construction, operation of the service, rights-of-way, maintenance, insurance, ticketing and consultant support
- assembled and trained a staff of volunteer on-board and platform supervisors
- coordinated *TRY RAIL!* service with services provided by local transit agencies
- developed a marketing plan
- secured corporate support
- developed and implemented a service marketing plan.

## Lessons learned

The CRDP has provided the RTA with information which will be invaluable in the planning and assessment of future commuter rail proposals and the implementation of a permanent commuter rail service in the following areas:

- Railroad operating agreements
- Equipment
- Insurance
- Maintenance
- Stations and temporary platforms
- On-board services
- Local transit agency coordination
- Service plan, marketing and ridership



- The Americans with Disabilities Act
- Consultants

This report describes the evolution of the CRDP and the lessons learned in its planning, implementation and operation. *TRY RAIL!* was a project which reflected the collective effort of a number of talented and dedicated people, local and distant transit agencies, private companies, and local governments. *TRY RAIL!* would not have happened without the fortuitous securing of nontraditional funding and the unwavering support of the RTA Board.



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# Background, funding and budget

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## The RTA and commuter rail

The RTA was created by action of the King, Snohomish and Pierce County councils in 1993. Under state statute, it is responsible for developing a comprehensive public transportation plan, including sources of local funding, for the RTA district; and submitting the funding plan to voters of the RTA district for approval. The RTA's district includes the urban areas of Snohomish, King and Pierce counties in Washington state extending from Everett in the north to Tacoma in the south. See Figure 1, a map of the RTA district.

The RTA staff, working under the direction of the eighteen-member RTA Board, was charged with the responsibility of evaluating alternative high-capacity transit plans featuring variable combinations of light rail, commuter rail, and expanded HOV lanes and bus services. The RTA Board was required to select a preferred alternative and to submit it for voter approval by September, 1995. Although all plans under consideration provided for implementation of a three-county commuter rail system, none contemplated implementation of commuter rail service prior to voter approval of the plan.

## Sonics Express

Consideration of a short-term commuter rail demonstration was triggered by renovation of the Seattle Coliseum, an event unrelated to the RTA or its planning processes. The temporary closing of the Coliseum, home court of the Seattle Supersonics NBA basketball team, required that the team play its 1994-95 home schedule of 41 games in the Tacoma Dome, 30 miles south of Seattle. The move created the potential for a transportation nightmare. Initial projections indicated 10,000 Sonics fans in 5,000 cars would commute during the afternoon rush hour from the Seattle area to Tacoma — the equivalent of two additional lanes of traffic on the already gridlocked Interstate 5.

When the Sonics' temporary move was announced in spring of 1994, RTA Boardmember Greg Nickels, a King County Councilmember, expressed interest in exploring commuter rail service to Sonics games to mitigate the effects of increased Sonics traffic. RTA Boardmembers Gary Locke (King County Executive), Ken Madsen (Pierce County Council member) and Paul Miller (Tacoma Deputy Mayor) shared Nickels' interest in exploring the feasibility of a "Sonics Express" train.

At the time the Sonics train idea surfaced, the RTA staff was fully engaged in preparing alternative comprehensive transportation and funding plans for RTA Board consideration. Henry Aronson, a planning consultant with experience in assembling private trains, was engaged to help the RTA explore the feasibility of funding and operating a commuter rail demonstration during the 1994-5 Sonics season. Aronson later became the project director.

# LEGEND



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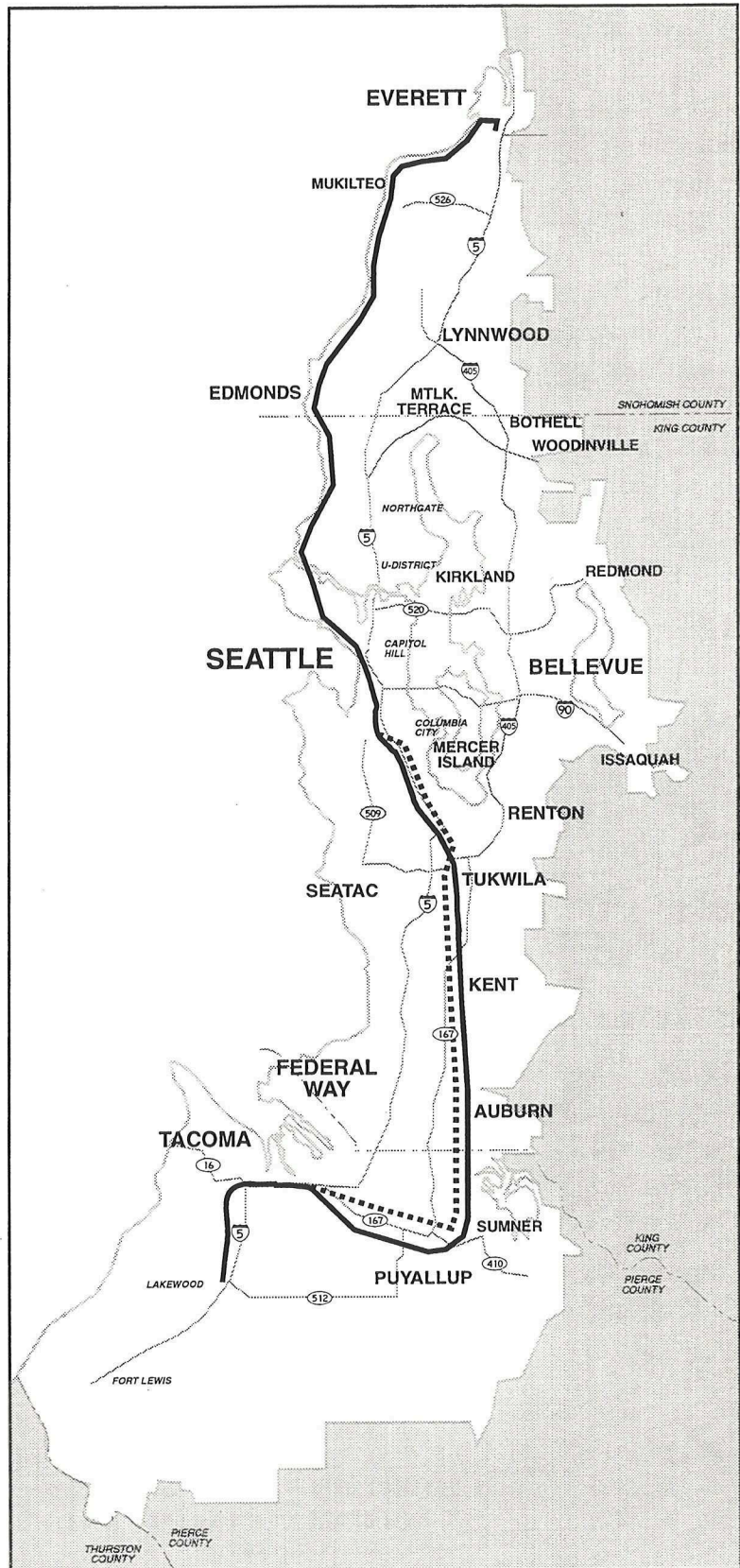
## Commuter Rail



Burlington  
Northern



Union  
Pacific





The first review of the project's feasibility established the existence of rights-of-way to Freighthouse Square on a siding three blocks from the Tacoma Dome; the availability of commuter rail cars with a capacity to transport approximately 2,000 passengers and the estimated costs of operation. Costs were initially projected from very rough estimates of known categories of costs — access to rights-of-way, train operation, lease and maintenance of equipment and insurance. Even assuming that an average of 1,200 persons would pay \$10 to ride to each of the 41 Sonics home games (a wildly optimistic projection), it was clear that operating a 41-game Sonics train filled to capacity with revenue passengers would require approximately \$1.5 million in additional support. It was quickly determined that this level of support could not be raised from the affected local governments or the State of Washington. There was too little time, too much money and too many competing priorities.

In mid-May, 1994, the RTA's consultant learned that the state Attorney General was planning to distribute the proceeds of an estimated \$13.5 million settlement from an antitrust suit against several oil companies. Because of the impracticality and administrative costs of identifying and refunding small amounts to persons overcharged at the gas pump by the oil companies, the attorney general planned to ask the court to permit use of the \$13.5 million settlement for energy conservation purposes within the state.

The proposed Sonics train appeared to fit the settlement criteria in that it would benefit all evening rush-hour commuters between Seattle and Tacoma by reducing traffic and fuel-based pollution. It would also demonstrate the advantages of rail travel as an alternative to the automobile — clearly conservation-related objectives. The RTA proposed that \$1.5 million of the oil settlement be used to fund the projected difference between Sonics passenger fares and cash and in-kind contributions, and the total projected cost of operating the Sonics service.

### **Commuter Rail Demonstration Project (*TRY RAIL!*)**

The state Attorney General agreed with the idea of the Sonics service but felt that a broader range of services was necessary. Funding requirements and further discussions with the RTA Board about what could be gained from a demonstration led to expanding the CRDP to a demonstration of commuter rail equipment to the largest possible number of persons within the three-county RTA jurisdiction.

In June 1994, the RTA Board approved further work on a demonstration to meet the following objectives:

- provide automobile commuters on the I-5 corridor with a transportation alternative to highway gridlock
- present the RTA and freight railroads with an opportunity to evaluate the issues raised by the introduction of time-sensitive passenger rail service into the heavily traveled Tacoma-Seattle-Everett freight rail corridor
- give freight-oriented local railroad personnel experience with passenger rail services
- provide the RTA with an opportunity to evaluate the issues raised by attempts to integrate commuter rail services and facilities into local communities and with services provided by local transit providers.

Formal application for approval of the \$1.5 million commuter rail demonstration grant as part of the settlement distribution was submitted to the court of jurisdiction in Los Angeles on June 20, 1994. Without the state Attorney General's funding there would have been no commuter rail demonstration.

By mid-July, 1994, RTA implementation of a commuter rail demonstration project was dependent on the resolution of a broad range of issues including: court approval of the oil settlement distribution proposal; establishing a service plan for rush hour, excursion and Sonics commuter services; negotiating rights-of-way and operating agreements with railroads; leasing and providing for the maintenance of equipment; securing insurance; establishing a budget; and funding the shortfall, if any, between the projected budget and the oil settlement proceeds. Timing was critical. The first Sonics game was scheduled for November 5, 1994.

By late July, 1994, it was clear that approval for dispersal of the antitrust settlement funds would not be granted immediately and that court-mandated periods for public comment and appeals would delay final approval of CRDP funding until early December. Accordingly, the Sonics service could not commence with the first game on November 5 unless alternative funding was located.

In late July and early August the RTA considered a two-phased CRDP. Phase I would provide for commuter service to the 15 Sonics home games scheduled between November 5 and December 31, and for 15 additional commuter round trips. It was estimated that Phase I would require the commitment of approximately \$600,000. Phase II would provide for service to the remaining 26 home games and an additional 26 commuter round trips between January 1 and March 31, 1995. Continuation of the service beyond January 1, 1995 would be fully dependent upon receipt of the Attorney General funds. (Ironically, experience later gained in obtaining insurance for the CRDP suggests that implementation of Phase I would have been impossible because of the costs and difficulties of obtaining insurance adequate to satisfy the railroads' requirements.)

On August 12, 1994, the RTA Board concluded that funding for Phase I was not available, that the substantial early commitments required to launch the CRDP should not be made until the antitrust settlement funds were secured, and, accordingly, that CRDP service could not commence before February, 1995. Based on the state Attorney General's court submission, the RTA Board authorized staff to further explore the feasibility of the commuter rail demonstration and to take the steps necessary — short of the award of major contracts — to implement the demonstration. The RTA Board approved the expenditure of up to \$200,000 to complete engineering and operations planning, and negotiation of agreements necessary to implement a commuter rail demonstration.

During the month of August, 1994, the RTA was advised that up to \$1 million in previously-approved Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds could be available for capital costs associated with the CRDP. The state Attorney General and FTA grants, combined with Sonics service fares and corporate contributions, would fully fund the projected CRDP.



On September 9, 1994, the RTA Board determined that implementation of a commuter rail project was feasible, formally decided to proceed ahead with the CRDP, and authorized the executive director to pursue FTA funding for the CRDP. The court order approving the state Attorney General's distribution of the funds was signed on October 17. Use of up to \$1 million of FTA funds was approved by the Congressional Conference on October 10, 1994.

## **Service planning and railroad agreements**

The Everett-Seattle-Tacoma rail corridor serves the container ports of Tacoma and Seattle — two of the busiest ports on the West Coast. Both ports are served by the highly competitive Burlington Northern (BN) and Union Pacific (UP) railroads (see Figure 1). In addition, frequent Amtrak intercity service is provided on this corridor. Operation of a permanent commuter service between Everett and Seattle will require interdependent negotiations with the ports, the state and the railroads providing for trackage rights, capital improvements, dispatching and control, maintenance of rights-of-way, train operations, and station construction and operations.

In planning for the CRDP, the RTA proposed that service between Seattle and the Freighthouse Square station in Tacoma, requiring use of both BN and UP tracks, be equitably divided between the UP and the BN. BN owns the only track between Seattle and Everett and it refused to permit a third-party operator of RTA commuter rail service on its tracks making an equal division difficult. Equal division was further complicated because the route between Seattle and Freighthouse Square in Tacoma required trackage rights from the BN, the UP, and Weyerhaeuser Corporation which owned a short piece of track leading to Freighthouse Square.

The RTA provided a detailed service plan to the UP and BN railroads on October 27, 1994, requesting schedules to support four weeks of twice-daily weekday rush hour commuter service between January 30 and March 5, 1995. The plan also asked the two railroads to schedule and service up to 14 Sonics games in Tacoma, depending on demand, from Everett, Edmonds, Seattle and Kent. BN and UP were asked to help plan the maximum number of excursions possible with funds available.

Both the BN and UP provided affirmative responses to the RTA service plan ask of October 27. The complementary service provided that all service originating in Everett be operated on the BN. Seattle-Freighthouse Square service was divided between the two lines with BN allowing UP crews to operate on the BN segment. While many details remained to be agreed upon, including pricing of the service, by early November it appeared that the service plan asked by the RTA could be provided by the UP and BN railroads to commence on January 28, 1995.

While operating issues between the railroads were being resolved, significant progress was also being made on the other major elements of the commuter demonstration. Plans for temporary platforms were drawn. The RTA reached tentative agreements with Amtrak regarding equipment maintenance and the use of its stations in Everett, Edmonds and Seattle. Marketing plans were developed. RTA staff worked with local transit agencies to coordinate services. Insurance quotes were obtained from the major insurance groups serving the passenger rail market. By mid-November, there were no apparent immovable obstacles to a January 28 inaugural of *TRY RAIL!* service.

## **Insurance, the fatal flaw?**

Insurance quotations received in early November required the RTA to self-insure the first \$500,000 of any CRDP claim. Moreover, the RTA could not obtain insurance for CRDP claims in excess of \$25 million at rates which it could afford given the limitations of funding available to the project. To accommodate these limitations the BN and UP were each asked to assume the first \$500,000 of loss and all claims in excess of \$25 million.

In early December, the UP advised the RTA that while it could agree to limit the RTA's liability to \$25 million, it was unable to assume those risks related to the first \$500,000. Thus, if the project was to proceed, it would have to be routed off of UP rights-of-way since the RTA could not provide the required indemnification for CRDP claims arising on UP property.

The BN agreed to assume risks in excess of \$25 million and to work with the RTA in establishing a jointly-funded escrow account to cover the first \$500,000 of any loss. The RTA and BN also agreed on an alternative Seattle-Kent-Tacoma route serving temporary platforms in Kent, adjacent to the Tacoma Dome for Sonics passengers, and the Tacoma Amtrak station for commuters. The delayed start of service and increased costs of providing for the escrow fund resulted in serving nine Sonics games rather than the 14 initially asked of the railroads.

## **Its a go**

No appeals were filed to the oil settlement award, and the \$1.5 million grant was received by the RTA on December 2, 1994. A letter of no prejudice was received from the FTA on the same day, allowing the RTA to spend its own funds while formally applying for the federal grant. Terms of the significant agreements underlying CRDP service were reached between late November and early January. Service commenced on January 28, 1995 as planned. The total cost of the project was budgeted at \$2.2 million. Actual expenses were \$2.3 million. See Appendix 1, *TRY RAIL!* budget and actual expenses.

The CRDP was comprised of several elements, many of which will be repeated if permanent commuter rail service is implemented in the Everett-Seattle-Tacoma corridor. The background, issues, and lessons learned in planning and implementing the most significant of these elements are described in the following sections.



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# Railroad operating agreement

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*TRY RAIL!* connected the cities of Tacoma and Everett with the city of Seattle. The concept had been the subject of extensive studies for several years prior to consideration of the Sonics train or CRDP. A brief description of the route, parties and interests involved in a proposed permanent commuter rail service will provide context for the *TRY RAIL!* railroad operating agreement.

## The route

The Everett-Seattle-Tacoma rail corridor is served by heavily-traveled mainline segments of the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern railroads connecting the ports of Seattle and Tacoma with their other routes. Both the ports and the railroads compete actively to carry the two million containers that move through the two ports annually. Each day the BN moves 88 long-haul and 23 regional trains, and the UP moves 23 long-haul and three regional trains, on their respective tracks.

### North of Seattle

The Seattle-Everett corridor is served exclusively by the BN mainline which continues on to Chicago (the UP has no tracks north of Seattle). This forty-mile mainline corridor includes three segments of single track, a single-track bridge, and goes through a number of intermediate cities with restricted speed limits. Amtrak also uses this route.

### South of Seattle

The 34-mile Seattle-Tacoma corridor is served by both the BN and the UP. A BN double-track railroad runs through the center of a number of small communities enroute. A UP single-track railroad runs along the western edge of the same communities served by the BN. Both railroads must clear two interlockings; one controlled by the BN, the second by the UP.

Delays from a combination of heavy freight rail traffic, low city speed limits, single-track segments, limited sidings and crossovers are common on both the north and south routes.

## The parties

Implementation of a permanent Everett-Seattle-Tacoma commuter rail service would require agreements regarding route selection with the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, the Washington State Department of Transportation, and the local communities to be served (where town centers compete for development with outlying landowner interests), in addition to BN and UP.

By the time the RTA seriously considered the CRDP in early summer, 1994:

- the cost of the track and signal improvements necessary to support permanent service in the 81-mile corridor was estimated to be \$215 million

- major interest-holders that stood to be affected by a permanent service were in the process of identifying their issues and developing their respective negotiating strategies
- engineering, environmental, traffic and delay studies had been commissioned;
- the RTA and the State of Washington had reached a tentative agreement on general capital improvements necessary to accommodate passenger and freight service over the Seattle-Tacoma corridor
- the RTA, ports and railroads all acknowledged that implementation of the permanent service could not adversely affect competition between the ports or the railroads, and that existing railroad freight capacity and mobility within the corridor must be maintained.

## The issues

The major issues the RTA, the BN and UP railroads, Washington State Department of Transportation, and local governments seek to resolve in planning for a permanent service mirrored issues required the CRDP and are common to start-up commuter operations throughout the nation:

- **Capacity** — All parties seek to optimize track utilization. The issue is how much capacity is necessary to accommodate dependable, on-time commuter peak-hour performance, on-time Amtrak intercity service, and capacity for the freight movements.
- **Capital improvements** — Linked to capacity issues are the extent and cost of track and signal improvements required for reliable and high speed passenger and freight service, and the allocation of these costs between commuter and freight rail.
- **Control** — The host railroad invariably controls dispatching of both commuter and freight services. The BN, however, contends that its control must extend to the crewing of all trains running on its tracks.
- **Elements of cost and pricing** — The basic issue is the definition of a method or formula for allocating fixed and incremental costs between the RTA and the railroads, including track and signal improvements, maintenance of rights-of-way, dispatching, and future upgrades. Similarly, will there be charges for track time and/or access? Is there a role for competitive bidding to establish cost and service benchmarks and/or identify alternative service providers?
- **Allocation of risk and insurance** — Liability is an obvious but significant issue in every commuter rail start-up. The railroads opening position is that they be fully indemnified for all losses related to commuter rail, including railroad negligence.
- **Operation of service** — Who is to operate the service? The owner of the tracks (as insisted by BN) or a third party, and what would serve as the basis for decision? What labor agreements apply and how do they affect crew levels?
- **Equipment and support services** — Ownership and maintenance of rolling stock, stations and platforms, and storage facilities.



## The CRDP railroad operating agreement

In early August, 1994 BN and UP submitted their first detailed proposals for an Everett-Tacoma Sonics-only service for the 41 game Sonics home season. Two trains were proposed: a BN train starting in Everett, and a UP train starting in Seattle. The BN train would travel the 40 miles between Everett and Seattle on BN tracks, stopping in Edmonds enroute. From Seattle south, both trains would travel for ten miles on BN tracks, 45 minutes apart, to the UP-controlled Black River interlocking, then 25 miles on UP tracks to Fife, and the last two miles on a 10 m.p.h. private track to Freight House Square, Tacoma. The proposal was supported with a detailed schedule and a combined cost of \$700,000, separated into four categories — transportation, equipment, maintenance of way, and general administration.

Discussions of the initial Sonics proposal, and the many proposals which followed, focused on the same core issues:

- **Scheduling** — The railroads asked that the service be limited to the 33 games with 7 p.m. start times and that the eight games starting at 7:30 PM be dropped. (The fact that every game would end at a different time, particularly those that went into overtime, was not considered in early discussions. The initial schedule provided that all postgame trains depart Tacoma at 9:50 PM, without consideration of possible overtime games. In practice, the unknown lengths of the games proved to be a problem.) The railroads stressed the importance of predictable, repeated service to guarantee track availability.

The RTA possessed limited information to support requests for faster or more closely-spaced trains on the heavily-traveled mainlines of the two railroads. The railroads were not particularly forthcoming with details. It became clear in later operations that the on-time performance achieved by the railroad followed in part from the considerable slack that is built into schedules, a technique used widely by Amtrak nationwide.

Drawing on the expertise of railroad consultants, the RTA attempted to tighten schedules that appeared to have slack built into them, to produce a more attractive service. The railroads emphasized throughout that the impediments to reliability — single track sections and bridge limited sidings and crossovers, inadequate signals and unprotected grade crossings — would be eliminated once the capital program was completed.

- **Cost of the service** — Charles DeWeese of De Leuw Cather and Shoji Oiye of KJM Associates Ltd., with the assistance of Parsons/Kaiser constructed a cost model for the RTA which served as a very useful benchmark in considering railroad cost proposals. The projected charges for train operations (crews, etc.) were found to be within industry standards. Charges for general and administrative expenses, which included track usage charges of \$172,000 (\$20.10 per train mile) in the initial Sonics proposal, was a large item in every proposal received, and in early discussion was implicitly acknowledged to be highly negotiable.
- **Insurance** — The railroads provided copies of their standard contract requiring the RTA to assume all liability arising out of the CRDP. The RTA believed that the railroads would assume liability in excess of \$25-35 million and focused on insuring the \$0-25 million layer.

- **BN desire for an all BN service** — The BN stressed that service from Seattle to the Tacoma Amtrak station (requiring a bus transfer to the Tacoma Dome) would save 15 minutes of running time. BN's preference for an all-BN service was clear throughout the months of discussions leading to implementation of *TRY RAIL!* The RTA was equally clear that the higher quality service to Sonics fans achieved by serving Freighthouse Square was paramount. As described elsewhere in this report, the insurance issue resulted in BN eventually achieving its objectives.

## **September-December 8, 1994**

During this period discussions centered on an expanded commuter-Sonics-excursion schedule that would evolve into the *TRY RAIL!* service. The changes were based on the requirements of funding sources and related considerations described at the beginning of this report, and on the RTA's responses to railroad concerns raised by the initial Sonics-only service ask.

The RTA initially focused on tightening schedules provided by the railroad. Consultants were particularly helpful during this period, moving the discussions from the general to the specific, and using back-channel contacts to determine the importance of constraints on the creation of additional slots or shortening running times, etc.

Price was not seriously discussed during this period. The cost proposals appeared to fit within the project's existing revenue. The railroads were well aware of funding sources and amounts available to the RTA (which conducts its business in open meetings). The RTA believed that there was considerable room for negotiation in railroad budgets, particularly with respect to general and administrative costs.

Prior to December 8, 1994, the RTA incorrectly understood that both the BN and the UP would assume risks up to \$500,000 (to cover the self-insurance requirement), and risks in excess of \$25 million. On December 8, the RTA learned that it had misunderstood earlier communications and that the UP was unable to assume this risk. The BN indicated it would be willing to work with the RTA in sharing the self-insurance burden providing all service was operated by BN on BN tracks. A decision was made that if the CRDP were to proceed, it would have to be with BN alone.

## **December 8 - January 28, 1995.**

RTA-BN negotiations moved quickly. By the third week of December, five weeks before service was to begin, the RTA and BN informally acknowledged that agreement had been reached on the basic contract elements – description of route, service, and price. Construction of seven temporary platforms was then authorized, an equipment lease was signed with the Government of Ontario (GO) and cars were readied for shipment, and staff recruitment began. Contract negotiations with respect to insurance continued until the agreement were signed on January 27, 1995.

The BN proposal, agreed to by the RTA, contained the following key provisions:

- **Route.** Entirely on BN tracks. This required changes in the location and construction of second platforms at Kent and Tacoma – one to serve the Tacoma Dome for Sonics games and a second at the Amtrak station for commuters. (The Freight House



Square location provided for in the BN-UP service plan served both groups, but required use of UP tracks.)

- **Services and Schedules.** The four weeks of rush-hour commuter service, mandated by the court as part of the state funding agreement and fundamental to the RTA, remained unchanged. The Sonics service was cut back to nine games, eliminating Sonics service from Seattle during the north commuter service, and from Everett during the south commuter service. The revised schedules were settled on January 11 and would be communicated to BN train crews, supervisors and dispatchers and the US Coast Guard (with respect to a BN bridge over navigable waters).

The agreement acknowledged that excursion services would be provided, at an additional cost, but schedules were not settled until one week after service began.

This fine tuning created savings from which the BN was able to partially fund the self insurance requirement.

- **Price** — The BN quoted a price of \$411,000 for the Sonics and commuter services plus \$5,000 for each excursion trip. The \$411,000 included \$125,000 for train, engine and yard wages, and \$286,000 for general and administrative costs (\$93,000 for track usage and \$160,000 for supervision).
- **The Self-Insured Retention Fund** — The self-insurance requirement was met through the creation of a \$500,000 escrow account. The first \$100,000 was to be committed by the RTA; the next \$315,000 by the BN; and, if required, the remaining \$85,000 by the RTA.

Claims up to \$100,000 would be paid from the RTA \$100,000 commitment; the next \$315,000 in claims from the BN commitment; and, from \$415-500,000 from the RTA. The funds were to be put in an escrow account and, to the extent not used, returned to the party making the contribution. In fact, no escrow account was created, no claims were made, and each of the parties retained the unneeded funds.

The net effect of providing for the self-insured retention was to potentially increase the RTA budget \$185,000 (the commitments to the escrow account), plus an amount by which the BN general and administrative charges may have been reduced through negotiations.

BN negotiations with its union were completed. Job bulletins were posted on January 13, 1995, with training to take place between January 25 and 27. The RTA was not aware of the substance of these negotiations or constraints that arose out of union considerations.

## **January 28 - March 16, 1995**

Beginning January 25, three days before service was to begin, staff from each of the participating organizations arrived at King Street Station, Seattle. The BN provided a Fort Worth-based supervisory staff, layers of supervisors from the two involved operating divisions, a full complement of engineers and conductors, two Managers of Operating Practices (MOPs), one of whom would ride every train, and a senior dispatcher. Technical support personnel was provided by Electro-Motive Division of General Motors (EMD), Bombardier, and GO Transit. Amtrak provided supervisory



staff and trainers. This group of roughly 50 persons joined an equal number of RTA staff, consultants, and platform and on-board volunteers for three days of training.

There was considerable confusion during the first week, much of which could have been reduced or avoided if there had been additional time for planning of the assignments and integration of arriving operating, consultant and support staff. Missteps, inevitable in any complicated venture, are less easily avoided. They ranged from the potentially catastrophic derailing of the locomotives on arrival in Seattle to the relatively humorous (in retrospect) disappearance of a brake handle, which resulted in the loss of one of the three badly needed training days (it was later determined that it had been taken home by an engineer-in-training). On reflection, the operating and volunteer staff were sufficiently well trained and the independent groups involved in the project quickly formed an impressive team.

From the passenger perspective a near perfect service was rolled out. One major newspaper described the inauguration as "flawless." The equipment was clean, the on-board volunteer Ambassador support staff was helpful and cheerfully conveyed their enthusiasm and BN operated with a high degree of professionalism.

The staff, and resulting service, improved by the day, although changes in service were apparent when new crews were assigned who were not familiar with the equipment. This occurred particularly when the sizes of consists (the complete set of cars and locomotives which make up a train) changed frequently, often daily, raising unique staffing and car spotting challenges. Joe Albinger and Tony Mollica, BN MOPs, were essential to meeting these challenges. Qualified by experience and authority, they made a significant contribution to the quality of service by their ability to make and implement operating decisions on the spot. Equipped with cellular telephones in addition to railroad communications equipment, they were in direct contact with dispatchers when potential delays arose, and with Amtrak on maintenance issues, and were a constant presence on the trains providing direction as needed.

Another person critical to the success of the CRDP was Harry W. Gilbert, designated BN Manager of Operations for the duration of the project. Gilbert, formerly supervisor of Seattle-based BN dispatchers with responsibility for controlling BN trains from Montana to Washington, oversaw the dispatching of every *TRY RAIL!* train. The respect which he commanded in the BN dispatch center and his constant supervision, coupled with his frequent creative dispatching decisions, played a significant role in *TRY RAIL!* achieving a 98 percent on-time record.

The BN claimed that the on-time record for the first two weeks of the CRDP resulted in 152 freight trains being delayed a total of 89.45 hours, or an average of 35.7 minutes of delay per delayed train. The BN further advised that virtually none of these delays would have happened if the \$215 million in track, grade crossing and signal improvements had been implemented. Yet, a close reading of the delay study provided by the BN suggests that many of the delays were not directly related to *TRY RAIL!* The report emphasizes the importance of combining improved operating practices and capital improvements to optimizing track utilization.

On weekends, upwards of 8,000 persons boarded excursion trains, more persons than had been seen at King Street since World War II troop movements. The BN staff, initially wary of the RTA on-board staff, came to trust and rely on the RTA volunteers



who opened and closed doors and effectively responded to the full range of needs presented by passengers unfamiliar with rail transportation.

## Conclusions

- **Railroad support of commuter rail demonstrations** — The willingness of the railroads to consider operating the CRDP followed directly from their interest in seeing a permanent commuter service implemented. They also wanted to demonstrate the need for substantial capital improvements that they were in the process of identifying. If commuter rail is implemented, the railroads will benefit from publicly funded capital improvements and increased capacity.

The six week CRDP raised many of the operational issues that are also raised by a permanent service scenario without benefit of increased capacity. Freight delays were certain to follow, and they did. Looking back, it is highly unlikely that either the BN or the UP would have considered supporting the CRDP had a permanent service not been under consideration.

- **Delays** — Operation for commuter rail in the Everett to Tacoma corridor did result in some freight delays even with careful scheduling and limited service.
- **Information** — Railroads have a tendency to provide very limited information in support of their positions. Without this information, railroad positions can appear arbitrary, which results in unnecessary tension in the negotiations. The RTA learned, late in the process and primarily from consultants, that there are considerable constraints to adding time-sensitive commuter trains to already crowded rights-of-way. Had the RTA been more fully advised of these constraints, negotiations might have moved more quickly and with less tension.

## Lessons learned

1. **The importance of railroad expertise** — The fundamental elements of a railroad operating agreement - defining operations and compensation for services and rights granted - are based on principles and practices unique to the railroad industry. An agency working to establish commuter rail will be well served by including respected railroad experts in its negotiating team.
2. **Identification of railroad self-interest** — Commuter rail is a publicly subsidized service which generally does not generate high profits for the host railroad. An agency seeking to introduce commuter rail rights on a high density freight right-of-way needs to identify railroad benefits it can provide if it is to obtain operating reliability and priority for commuter rail services. Capital investments that increase capacity in the Everett-Tacoma corridor are of critical importance to the BN and UP and will be fundamental to the RTA gaining rights to operate commuter rail.
3. **On-time performance is dependent upon effective system-wide dispatching** — Railroad dispatchers have the responsibility to accommodate freight and passenger trains that often compete for scarce track space. Maximum utilization of rights-of-way is dependent upon effective system-wide dispatching which, if consistently achieved, can significantly lessen the need for capital improvements that would otherwise be required.

4. **The elements of a commuter service are interdependent** — A commuter rail agency must provide for the effective coordination of a number of related, but independently managed, essential services including: railroad operations, equipment maintenance, connecting local transportation and information services, and security.

Overall quality of the service will be judged by the weakest link. Consistent failure of any one element threatens the entire service.

5. **Labor relations, crewing, and level of staffing must involve the sponsoring agency** — An agency sponsoring commuter rail is dependent upon a number of factors driven by labor agreements, including: a regularly-assigned, passenger-oriented crew which provide continuity; the minimum crew size possible consistent with safe operations; and a contract with sufficient schedule flexibility to accommodate reasonable changes. The sponsoring agency must have a structured role in developing the labor agreement which establishes these critical labor-management relationships.
6. **The importance of specific communications with railroads** — A pattern that was not immediately obvious to the RTA was the railroads' reluctance to provide informative responses to general inquiries. This probably follows from the specificity which characterizes railroad operations in general. When schedule proposals took the form of specific timetables, rather than general requests for, say, a Saturday excursion, the railroads responded quickly and most often in support of RTA requests.



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# Equipment

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The RTA was advised by industry sources in the spring of 1994 that there was little to no commuter rail passenger equipment available for lease. Thus, project planners immediately set out to locate and, if possible, obtain an option to lease suitable equipment should a limited commuter rail demonstration prove to be feasible. Without equipment there could be no project.

In the summer of 1994 the only suitable and available passenger cars the RTA was able to locate were owned by GO Transit in Toronto, Canada. Leads to other equipment proved false. With the exception of GO Transit, existing transit and rail agencies – including Amtrak, Canada's VIA Rail, Los Angeles Metrolink, Chicago Metra and San Diego North County Transit District – did not have surplus equipment available for lease. The two major North American based equipment manufacturers, Bombardier Corporation and MK Rail Corporation, were keen to demonstrate their equipment but did not have equipment available for lease and could not locate surplus equipment.

GO Transit has been operating Bombardier passenger cars for seventeen years. It currently operates a fleet of passenger cars which includes the original Series I cars and four successive, incrementally improved Series II, III, IV and V cars. GO's long term acquisition policy, and slightly lower-than-projected ridership increases, created a temporary surplus of Bombardier 160-passenger cars. These cars had been leased to Metrolink in Los Angeles immediately after the February, 1994 earthquake and are committed to B.C. Transit in Vancouver, Canada for use in its November, 1995 commuter rail start up. These cars will be returned to GO in early 1996 as cars presently being manufactured by Bombardier for B.C. Transit are delivered.

GO Transit equipment is unique in that it operates on 575 volt power rather than the U.S. and Canadian standard of 480 volts. The current GO fleet consists of EMD F-59 locomotives (which provide 575 volt head end power), bi-level passenger cars, and bi-level cab cars (passenger cars with an engineers compartment at one end, equipped with a full set of controls). GO consists are controlled from the cab car on the outbound trip and from the locomotive on the inbound trip.

When initially contacted in the summer of 1994, GO Transit could not commit to providing the RTA with locomotives or cab cars. It did offer to lease admittedly antiquated but serviceable auxiliary power control units (APCU's) capable of providing the required 575 volt head end power and a control station for the engineer. Based on this, the RTA planned to lease locomotives from BN, Amtrak or UP. This would have resulted in a combination of leased locomotives providing locomotive power, GO bi-level passenger cars, and APCU's providing the necessary 575 volt head end power and a control station at the end opposite the locomotive.

The necessity of combining dissimilar equipment – locomotives generating 480 volt power, GO Transit passenger cars requiring 575 volt power, and antiquated 575 volt APCU's – concerned RTA planners and consultants. Metrolink, an operating transit



agency with a full-time shop and maintenance department, reported that it had considerable difficulty keeping the APCU's in service. The RTA would have been exposed to an even greater loss of service due to breakdowns because of its necessary reliance on an outside maintenance contractor without experience with APCU's or Bombardier cars. The problem was further complicated by the national shortage of locomotive power, particularly if a unit were to be required on short notice in the event of a breakdown. The RTA determined that the risk was acceptable after receiving assurances from the BN, UP and Amtrak that the required power units would be provided and that a third APCU from GO Transit was available as a backup.

GO Transit, particularly Paul Johannsson, Director, Rail Services, remained supportive and flexible throughout the planning and operational phases of the project. It agreed to reserve 14 bi-level passenger cars and 3 APCU's until the RTA determined if the project was feasible and could be funded.

Shortly before the equipment was to be shipped, Mr. Johannsson offered to lease two new F59 locomotives (which provided 575 volt head end power) and to substitute two bi-level passenger cab cars for two passenger cars. This change eliminated RTA concerns about the shortage of locomotives and the capabilities of the APCU's. It permitted the RTA to offer service on consists that were designed to be operated as a unit, and eliminated the need to purchase step-up transformers to provide head end power in the yard.

The RTA received essential technical support from the EMD Division of General Motors, manufacturers of the F-59 locomotives, Bombardier Corporation (manufacturers of the passenger cars), and GO Transit. All stationed technical representatives in Seattle to assist RTA, Amtrak (the contract maintenance provider), and BN staff (the operator), in the inspection, preparation and operation of the equipment prior to commencement of revenue service. Specifically:

- GO Transit provided two service representatives (Doug Smith and Peter Cristopher) in Seattle prior to arrival of the equipment through the inauguration of passenger service. They were intimately familiar with every aspect of the sometimes quirky 17-year old passenger cars and provided invaluable assistance in readying the equipment for service and in training staff unfamiliar with the Bombardier equipment. The GO representatives were essential to the faultless, on-time launch of *TRY RAIL!* revenue service.
- EMD provided a technical representative (Neil Brown) in Seattle prior to arrival of the F-59 locomotives through the first several weeks of operation. Once service commenced, he rode one of the services each day he was present. Although the equipment was less than six months old, under warranty, and operated without a problem for the duration of the project, the EMD representative provided a number of useful services including training Amtrak staff, overseeing the required 92-day inspection, and generally being available as needed.
- Bombardier stationed a technical representative (Larry Jennings) in Seattle for the duration of the project. He tirelessly rode a train each day of service and was continually involved in responding to the kinds of ongoing malfunctions that can be expected in seventeen-year-old equipment – malfunctioning door-opening mechanisms, blown fuses, tripped circuit breakers, clogged heads, electrical failures,



etc. The Bombardier representative was critical to providing what the passenger perceived to be virtually flawless service on equipment which experienced ongoing minor malfunctions.

## Lessons Learned

1. **Availability** — There is a shortage of suitable commuter rail equipment for lease. GO will soon require the equipment used in the CRDP for its services and it is improbable that other rail or transit agencies will have suitable surplus equipment for lease. If a permanent service is commenced, realistic lead times for the delivery of equipment must be planned as the alternative of leased equipment will probably not be available. (Unavailability of equipment is understandable – it is expensive, transit agencies operate on tight and often shrinking budgets which do not permit the purchase of excess capacity, and, ridership on existing services is increasing, often straining existing capacity.)
2. **Compatibility** — The RTA's experience supported industry recommendations that when equipment specifications are drawn and equipment is purchased, great care should be taken to insure that locomotive and passenger car engineering and design are carefully integrated and coordinated.
3. **Technical support** — Technical support provided by GO, EMD and Bombardier was critical to keeping the CRDP equipment (particularly the Bombardier cars) in service. This kind of support would be useful in the training of local maintenance staff. If a permanent service is established, consideration should be given to providing considerable staff training in any equipment purchase contract. Technical support should also be available through the initial start-up period of operation.
4. **Suitability of equipment** — A common thread ran through significant numbers of comment cards received from over 4,000 passengers indicating general satisfaction with the bi-level passengers cars. A negative reaction to the seats was reflected in an Amtrak-sponsored survey of *TRY RAIL!* passengers which reported that passengers gave "seat comfort" a rating of 7.88 out of ten, a low rating when compared to other responses. See Appendix 2, RTA *TRY RAIL!* Research Preliminary Report.

Comment cards will be helpful to RTA staff in designing specifications for equipment should a permanent service be initiated.

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# Insurance

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## Liability insurance

Operators of commuter rail are exposed to considerable risk. While the risk of an accident is relatively low, potential damages resulting from an accident are large. Nationally, obtaining insurance adequate to protect sponsoring agencies and to meet the requirements of the railroads and commuter service operators is one of the most difficult issues to resolve before launching a commuter rail service. The CRDP was no exception.

The CRDP, a micro-version of a full-scale passenger rail service, raised the risk issues confronting the RTA in a highly compressed framework. The large risk exposures confronting cooperating cities, counties, and contractual partners who owned and operated the rail lines and leased equipment had to be assumed, distributed or indemnified. Because none of the parties involved in planning the CRDP was in a position to assume this risk, insurance was the only option. The RTA, a new agency without railroad operating experience, assets or a revenue stream, was not able to assume the risk or in a good bargaining position to purchase insurance.

Four factors were essential to the RTA's ability to secure insurance at affordable rates, or distribute uninsurable risks, within a comparatively short period of time: the experience, commitment and unflagging efforts of Scott Denham, the Risk Administrator for King County Metro; the assistance of Marsh & McLennan, an influential national insurance brokerage firm with extensive experience in placing railroad insurance; an innovative arrangement with the operating railroad; and close communication between all parties, particularly with respect to coordination of negotiation and drafting of language relating to liability, allocation of risk, and insurance, in operating, maintenance and insurance agreements.

Scott Denham was involved in CRDP risk issues from the initial planning stages. He was instrumental in identifying and evaluating the risks and determining which risks needed to be insured, obtaining the services of Marsh & McLennan (with national resources and the ability to creatively generate ideas and approaches to underwriting), and in coordinating RTA efforts to place the required coverages.

Insurance underwriters require extensive information regarding a proposed service prior to extending quotes – information which normally requires several months to assemble. The RTA, with ongoing assistance from Scott Denham and Marsh & McLennan, quickly assembled this information from the operating railroads, local entities, track owners, and equipment owner/lessors, saving months in the time ordinarily required to complete this task. This could not have been accomplished without the team effort of a responsive agency, an experienced risk manager and a well-connected national broker.



The Burlington Northern Railroad (BN) and the Union Pacific Railroad (UP), owners of the two rights-of-way involved in the initial service plan, required unlimited indemnification for losses arising out of the CRDP. Insurance for losses in excess of \$25 million was available but prohibitively expensive. Accordingly, owners of rights-of-way (and operating railroads) had to assume risk of losses in excess of \$25 million for the project to move ahead.

The insurance markets for railroad liability insurance commonly offer layers of insurance in excess of a self-insured retention level (SIR) of at least \$2 to \$5 million. Initial responses to the RTA's requests for quotes required a \$2 million SIR, the lowest then available in the market. The RTA could not meet this requirement with its limited funding. Through the aggressive efforts of Marsh & McLennan in developing creative ideas and approaches to underwriting the risk, a SIR of \$500,000 was negotiated on behalf of the RTA. Had the SIR level not be lowered, the CRDP would have been abandoned.

In early December, 1994 the UP advised the RTA that it was unable to assume any portion of the risks within the \$500,000 SIR. Thus, if the project was to proceed, it would have to be routed off of UP rights-of-way since the RTA could not provide the required indemnification for CRDP claims arising on UP property.

The BN agreed to work with the RTA to establish a \$500,000 SIR fund with roughly equal contributions from each party. Fortunately there were no claims. (There were three known minor incidents involving passengers on property adjacent to a CRDP platform but no claims have been made.)

Constant communication with the BN, GO Transit and Amtrak risk management teams, ably coordinated by Robert Gunter of Preston Gates and Ellis, counsel to the RTA, helped the process of securing the correct coverage contract and policy language. The railroad liability policy had exclusions for passenger exposures, pollution, and evacuation expenses, all common to contracts insuring freight operations. Endorsements removing these exclusions were approved.

The RTA's record of safe operations during the course of the demonstration and its exposure to the railroad insurance industry should mean that the RTA will obtain the insurance coverage required for permanent service more quickly and at a lower total cost than would have been possible without the demonstration.

## **Property insurance**

Property insurance to cover loss or damage to the leased rolling stock for the term of the project (including transportation to and from Toronto) was placed, in agreement with GO Transit, at replacement value. GO required that the cars be insured at replacement value (rather than depreciated value) because there are no used cars available and, in the event of a total loss, the equipment would have to be replaced by new equipment.

## **Miscellaneous coverages**

The BN required that the contractor constructing the temporary platforms secure a Railroad Protective policy to cover liability incurred on railroad property. Limits and

named insureds were stipulated in the contracts and permits authorizing the contractor to work on railroad property.

The RTA obtained Commercial General Liability, Business Auto and Worker's Compensation policies to cover employees and agents working on the CRDP.

## **Lessons learned**

1. **Commuter rail operators will assume all risks** — Issues involving risks attendant to the operation of passenger rail service - identification, allocation, and insurance of risk - may be among the most difficult to solve in planning and implementing commuter rail service. The railroads are generally unwilling to assume any risks related to passenger rail, providing the commuter rail agency with limited room for negotiating allocation of risk. These issues should be addressed and aggressively pursued immediately following any decision to implement commuter rail services.
2. **Terms are highly negotiable** — Terms, conditions and costs of railroad liability insurance are highly negotiable. The services of an experienced risk administrator, and an insurance broker with experience in placing insurance in national and international markets, should be retained by an agency sponsoring commuter rail services. They can significantly affect the outcome of risk and insurance decisions.
3. **Early involvement by all parties is needed** — All parties exposed to risks created by a commuter rail operation (including the sponsoring agency, the railroad operator, the equipment suppliers, the owners of rights-of-way, local transit agencies providing connecting services, owners of platforms and stations, and third-party maintenance providers) should be involved in each stage of the process of risk identification, allocation, and the placement of insurance.



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# Maintenance

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## Evaluation of maintenance alternatives

The cars designated by GO for shipment to Seattle remained in storage in Toronto following their return by Metrolink from Los Angeles. At the time they were inspected by RTA staff on October 31, 1995, the coaches were in fairly rugged condition. GO Transit was in the process of checking out mechanical and electrical systems and replacing broken windows and badly worn or soiled carpets and seat covers, and committed to use its best efforts to have the cars ready for revenue service prior to delivery in Seattle in January, 1995.

GO also agreed to prepare a list of suggested spare parts and consumable supplies (light bulbs, paper towels and cups were not available in the required sizes in the U.S.) and to assemble available manuals, diagrams and schematics, maintenance sheets and training documents. Relevant GO maintenance schedules were provided and would be incorporated into the proposed equipment lease agreement. These schedules would define the scope of work in the contract which the RTA intended to enter for equipment maintenance in Seattle with either the BN or Amtrak, both of which maintained large maintenance yards in Seattle.

During the initial planning stages of the CRDP the BN offered to maintain the GO equipment. This offer was consistent with the BN's frequently repeated statement that it needed to control all aspects of any commuter operation on BN track in order to assure reliability of both the passenger and freight operations. Consultants to the RTA advised that the BN lacked the facilities and labor force to maintain passenger coaches (and the then-anticipated APCU's) in a satisfactory manner. Had the BN undertaken maintenance of the GO equipment it most probably would have subcontracted with Amtrak for passenger car support.

Amtrak, contacted by RTA consultants in early November, 1994 also indicated a willingness to provide maintenance services to the CRDP. Ron Hartman, Amtrak's newly-appointed Assistant Vice President for Contract Services, and Kurt Laird, Amtrak's Seattle-based District Superintendent, met with project representatives in late November to explore ways in which Amtrak could support the project. The offer to enter into a stand-alone maintenance agreement, unrelated to an operating agreement, represented a new type of venture for Amtrak.

## Selection of Amtrak

The RTA elected to contract directly with Amtrak for maintenance. Amtrak reviewed the GO maintenance and CRDP-proposed service schedules (number of trips, number of cars) and responded with a detailed bid providing for GO-required scheduled maintenance, switching, mid-day car cleaning, fueling, the pumping of toilets and the provision of water. The Amtrak bid was accepted and an additional contract was

entered into with a local service provider for late- night car cleaning at Everett and Tacoma. The bid was reviewed by railroad consultants to the RTA and found to be reasonable.

Specifically, Amtrak agreed to: inspect and service coaches and locomotives daily; repair equipment as necessary; conduct periodic tests and inspections mandated by the Federal Railroad Administration and GO; clean and supply the coaches daily; fuel the locomotives; maintain and account for an inventory of spare parts supplied by GO; provide switching services between Seattle's King Street Station and the Amtrak yard and, as necessary, to add or subtract coaches from a consist.

## Start-up problems

Amtrak's original interest in serving as the RTA maintenance contract was based on a national interest in expanding its commuter rail contract services and a general commitment to expanded passenger rail services. Amtrak believed that the additional workload could be managed by hiring new staff in January that was otherwise scheduled for hiring in late spring to support expanded intercity service. Unfortunately, due to developments on the national level, this new personnel was not brought on.

As a result, the 20 percent increase in the number of cars and locomotives to be maintained resulting from *TRY RAIL!* stretched Amtrak's capabilities to the limit. The impact of the 20 percent increase was probably understated given Amtrak's lack of familiarity with the Bombardier and EMD equipment. Problems with staffing were exacerbated by inadequate planning during the period between reaching an agreement and the arrival of the equipment.

Amtrak's lack of planning was not solely responsible for maintenance problems at the beginning of the project. There were other factors:

- The late and staggered arrival of the GO equipment prevented Amtrak and other technicians involved from getting an early start. The coaches arrived first, seven days before the project was to begin, followed two days later by the locomotives and APCU.
- The locomotives and APCU derailed in the BN yard prior to delivery. Rerailing, inspecting and repairing one locomotive that had been slightly damaged during rerailing delayed the delivery of the locomotives by another three days, during which time there was no head end power available to conduct the necessary inspections, testing and preparation of the coaches for service.
- Throughout this period heavy rains, flooding, and mud slides caused disruptions to Amtrak intercity service, resulting in delays, trains arriving at unscheduled intervals and disruption of normal maintenance schedules. In sum, the week prior to commencement of service was difficult.
- RTA project management did not establish direct lines of communication with Amtrak or effectively monitor maintenance. RTA consultants were aware that significant problems existed but were fully engaged in attempting to resolve the problems and did not advise or involve project managers. Senior Amtrak management was probably also unaware that Amtrak staff was inadequately



prepared to service the GO equipment. Had RTA project management been better advised of maintenance problems at the time the equipment arrived, it is probable that Amtrak management would have done whatever was necessary to correct the problems. (For example, it could have drawn on the Amtrak maintenance facility supporting the Los Angeles Metrolink system which had considerable experience maintaining Bombardier equipment.)

## **Placing equipment in service**

Fortunately, GO Transit, Bombardier, EMD and RTA technical consultants were stationed in Seattle prior to arrival of the equipment. Each had come to Seattle to train Amtrak staff to inspect, test, and maintain equipment manufactured by their companies. In addition, RTA engineer Dick Seelye worked tirelessly throughout the demonstration filling in whenever there were gaps or finding (and sometimes making) parts and supplies. They worked around the clock from the time the equipment arrived until the launch of the service, performing the services that they had expected to train others to provide. They succeeded in placing all of the equipment in first-rate condition in five days.

## **Ongoing maintenance**

Jim Greider of Amtrak was put directly in charge of maintaining the GO equipment two days after service was commenced, filling a gap in leadership. Prior to Greider's appointment, no one oversaw Amtrak's maintenance. Greider was attentive to RTA concerns and did all within his power to effectively supervise Amtrak maintenance of the equipment.

Notwithstanding Greider's efforts, maintenance continued to be an ongoing problem. The Amtrak yard was responsible for servicing the approximately 300 coaches and 90 locomotives that comprised the 56 trains (in addition to the GO equipment) serviced each week. Given the workload and deadlines, it is not surprising that RTA consultants observed that Amtrak's line personnel saw their first priority as maintenance of the Amtrak intercity trains, with the GO equipment a clear second and often only partially-served priority.

The most glaring problem was the inconsistent cleaning and restocking of the equipment – supplies were often not restocked, trash not completely emptied, and windows were left unwashed.

Inadequate training of switching crews, particularly with respect to the Bombardier brake system with which they were not familiar, resulted in inordinate delays in cutting in and switching out (adding or subtracting) cars to or from a consist. This problem was exacerbated by the need for frequent changes in consist size required to respond to ridership increases.

Amtrak maintenance of the GO equipment improved with time. Under Greider's direction, particular electricians, machinists and car men were designated to service, and became increasingly familiar with the GO equipment. Backup and some training was provided by the omnipresent Bombardier representative, either in the yard or while riding a service. When cleaning and restocking were left undone, they were often

personally completed by Greider, the Bombardier representative, helpful Amtrak volunteers (particularly Doug Bussler), and RTA staff (particularly RTA engineer Dick Seelye) and volunteers. These combined efforts resulted in safe trains that customers perceived as clean and functioning appropriately.

The RTA's failure to closely monitor the Amtrak relationship contributed to the problem. Kurt Laird and Ron Hartman remained fully supportive and responsive to the RTA concerns and requests throughout the project and would unquestionably have used their best efforts to resolve the above-mentioned problems had they been brought to their attention. The experience gained from the CRDP should enable Amtrak and the RTA to design and monitor first-rate maintenance programs in the future.

## **Lessons learned**

1. **Lead time** — Equipment should be delivered well before service begins to permit training and familiarization with all aspects of maintenance, including: mandated testing and inspections, routine maintenance and repairs, responding to simulated breakdowns, restocking requirements, cutting in and switching out cars, all aspects of cleaning, handling of spare parts, and review of technical manuals and schematics.
2. **Technical support** — On-site training by factory representatives of equipment manufactures is particularly important and should be liberally provided for in all contracts for purchase of equipment.
3. **Continuity of supervision and work force** — If maintenance is provided by a third-party contractor with responsibility for maintaining equipment for several customers, the RTA should require that a supervisor be designated with specific responsibility for overseeing RTA maintenance and that workers are identified, trained on and permanently assigned to RTA equipment.
4. **Worker productivity** — Union agreements and work rules should be reviewed and reasonable productivity targets should be established and provided for in future maintenance contracts. This may require the support of and concessions from labor organizations.
5. **Communication** — If maintenance is contracted out, RTA management should establish direct lines of communication with the maintenance provider to effectively monitor service delivery service.



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# Stations and temporary platforms

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## Location of stops and platforms

The issues raised in selecting *TRY RAIL!* stops and platform locations included: accessibility by commuters, safety, cost, parking, proximity to park-and-ride facilities, the requirement of railroad, local political, transit agency and business support, access for persons with disabilities, environmental considerations and permitting, security and lighting.

Starting with the general Everett-Tacoma alignment proposed for the permanent service, and the need to serve the Tacoma Dome, stops at Everett, Edmonds, Seattle and Tacoma were included in all plans. Kent was selected as the stop between Seattle and Tacoma on both the BN and UP alignments because it was roughly equal distant between Seattle and Tacoma, served a large number of commuters, had ample parking, and, was strongly supported by local interests.

In Edmonds and Seattle, the Amtrak stations were the logical platform locations. The Amtrak station in Everett was eliminated from consideration because it was not convenient for commuters, lacked parking, and was not well served by local buses. An alternative site was identified that provided parking on leased property, and had easy access to local transit and I-5.

In Kent a UP alignment passed a large park-and-ride Metro lot with property available for a temporary platform. In Tacoma, a site adjacent to Freighthouse Square (FHS), three blocks from the Tacoma Dome, was located. Keith Stone, the owner of FHS, was looking to the future service of a dinner-excursion train, unrelated to the RTA, and was willing to do all things necessary to develop the FHS platform including funding a majority of the cost.

By November, 1994 RTA engineer Ron Kuthenruether, consultant Charles DeWeese, and Parsons Brinckerhoff/Kaiser completed plans for each of the platforms. Bids were advertised and Hisey Construction Inc. was selected. A notice to proceed was withheld awaiting confirmation of funding and RTA Board final approval.

The shift to an all BN route on December 8 described elsewhere in this report, required a rapid relocation of the Kent and Tacoma platforms. In Kent, BN double tracks required two platforms to serve the north and southbound tracks.

The location change in Tacoma was particularly challenging. The Amtrak station has very limited parking and is not within convenient walking distance to the Tacoma Dome. The site selected for the Sonics service — the end of an unpaved street that dead-ends on BN property three blocks from the Tacoma Dome — could not easily be served by buses and was therefore unsuitable for commuter service. Accordingly, two platforms were developed: the BN site for the Sonics service and the Amtrak station connected to park-and-ride lots for commuters by local transit.

## Design and construction of platforms

Platform design included lighting, access to parking or transit stops, accessible ramps to serve persons with disabilities, ADA strips adjacent to the platform edge, rails and, fencing where required.

Amtrak and the railroads were actively involved in platform design and construction. Flagging crews were required at each construction site during construction and removal. Local jurisdictions were involved in permitting and providing in-kind support including lighting and fencing.

Asphalt platforms were constructed eight inches above the top of the rail to avoid the necessity of step-boxes. With the exception of the Kent and Tacoma Sonics locations, platforms were a minimum of 325 feet long, sufficient to serve all doors of a three-car consist. The Kent and Tacoma Sonics platform sites were limited and shorter platforms were built that were difficult for engineers to spot.

## Joint use of stations

Amtrak's Kurt Laird was particularly helpful in providing for joint use of Amtrak station facilities at Edmonds, Seattle and Tacoma, arranging for *TRY RAIL!* passenger comfort and information, allocating Amtrak personnel to assist in training RTA staff (particularly with respect to providing Doug Bussler who conducted an important training session regarding compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act) and in frequently lending his considerable expertise with respect to passenger movement, station usage and security issues as they arose.

## Lessons learned

1. **Early involvement of all parties.** The earliest possible identification, involvement and coordination of all parties involved in location of stops, construction of platforms, and joint usage of stations is essential. The necessity for coordination is obvious. Timing and communication is less so. Siting and joint usage decisions have the potential to impact a wide variety of interests — these interests need be involved at the earliest date possible and consulted at each stage of development. Designation of one person responsible for such coordination should be considered.
2. **Keep jurisdictions informed** — In planning the CRDP, some local planners were not kept sufficiently informed of sometimes fast and furious changes in project planning, particularly with respect to the shift to an all BN alignment. Such omissions have the potential to create substantial obstacles to project implementation.
3. **Coordination of joint use facilities** — Joint use of Amtrak stations requires particularly careful coordination and planning to avoid confusing passengers and inconveniencing intercity travelers. Coordination should include information and announcements, directing boarding and arriving passengers, plus use of waiting areas and rest-room facilities,



4. **Support from local jurisdictions** — Local communities can provide invaluable in-kind assistance. Each of the communities served by *TRY RAIL!* recognized that the service benefited the community. Although local budgets were set and committed by the time the CRDP was planned, considerable in-kind assistance was provided including paving and gravel for parking, lighting, fencing and security.

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## On-board services

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*TRY RAIL!* passengers were considered customers who had choices between alternative modes of transportation. On-board services were designed to attract customer-passengers and make their trip as enjoyable as possible. The three primary elements of *TRY RAIL!* on-board services included volunteer Ambassadors, passenger amenities, and information distribution.

### The Ambassador Program

The BN proposed to operate *TRY RAIL!* trains with two person crews, an engineer and a conductor. The freight oriented BN crew had little to no passenger experience and would be fully occupied with running the train. RTA staff, anticipating thousands of passengers, many (perhaps a majority) of whom had never ridden a train before, knew there would be many questions that deserved answers, persons with disabilities who might require assistance, and excited or lost persons needing some form of assistance that the lone BN conductor could not provide. The position of RTA Ambassadors was created to provide this assistance.

Although RTA staff were uncertain about the precise function of on-board Ambassadors, there was a strong intuitive sense, that proved correct, that this would be an important element of the service.

The role of platform Ambassador was clearer — help arriving and departing *TRY RAIL!* passengers with parking, bus transfer, and local information; and help with missed connections, and emergencies. This was a particularly important role at the Everett, Kent and Tacoma Dome stops, that were unstaffed temporary strips of asphalt created for the limited purpose of boarding *TRY RAIL!* passengers. Platform Ambassadors also assisted in directing and controlling crowds and making station announcements at the Amtrak stations in Edmonds, Seattle and Tacoma.

The Ambassador idea was borrowed from Metrolink in Los Angeles. The Metrolink Ambassador program, that stationed persons on-board and on platforms to provide information and assist passengers, was adopted for a limited period to assist new passengers transition into seasoned commuters. The program was being phased out at the time RTA staff visited but those that remained, mostly on the platform, were most impressive and served as a model for the *TRY RAIL!* Ambassador program.

Until the later planning stages of the CRDP, RTA staff assumed that the Ambassador program would be funded by a corporate sponsor. Sponsorship of the *TRY RAIL!* Ambassador program offered a public spirited group the potential to promote its image, product and service through a very visible, enthusiastic, part-time, uniformed staff of the sponsors employees and/or students, retirees, rail buffs and others interested in the service. Early contacts with banks, cellular service providers, and coffee distributors were particularly encouraging.



The corporate sponsorship idea failed because funding delays, followed by uncertainties caused by the shift in routes, prevented the RTA from firmly committing to the service until six weeks before service was to begin. Potential sponsors remained interested but required more lead time. Project staff are confident that had there been sufficient lead time, the Ambassador program would have received corporate support. Caught short with the need for a staff for which no budget existed (because of the unfounded reliance on corporate sponsors), the RTA assigned Barbara Gilliland to the task of assembling a staff of volunteer Ambassadors.

Volunteers were recruited from three main sources: special interest rail organizations with knowledgeable rail enthusiasts and railroad retirees as members; transit agencies with employees experienced in customer service; and, the RTA staff

Recruitment was not easy. Volunteers were asked to attend two half-day training sessions and serve a minimum of one week stints on the twice daily inbound-outbound commuter, and/or weekend excursion trains. Most had other jobs and did not live near the point of departure, the trains started at 6 AM, and the service was commenced in the middle of a northwest winter. Volunteers were compensated with a uniform of a jacket, a sweatshirt, a tee-shirt, and hat; mileage for commuting to and from the train, and a lunch on weekend all-day shifts serving on excursion trains.

Gilliland, with essential support from Bob White, the RTA's Commuter Rail Services Manager, drew on contacts and chits developed over seventeen years in the public transportation business and recruited an initial group of 30 volunteers that grew to 100 by the end of the project. Recruitment was an ongoing struggle. Weekend trains grew to 13 cars carrying 8,000 passengers in the course of a day, requiring a minimum of one Ambassador per car plus Ambassadors at each stop to commit a weekend day to meet four trains spread out over ten hours.

In addition to recruitment, Gilliland was coordinating the activities of local jurisdictions, and developing an Ambassador training manual with consultant Jim Stoetzel. It was becoming increasingly clear that overseeing the Ambassador program was a full time position. Two weeks before service began, the RTA retained the services of Ken Deans of Corporate Event Productions to pull the growing Ambassador program together. Coming from a background of producing corporate events and coordinating rock groups on the road, his experience was invaluable. He established what quickly became the nerve center of *TRY RAIL!* in a trailer located at the Amtrak station in Seattle, and effectively served as Ambassador overseer for the duration of the project.

The position of Ambassador Supervisor was also created. One Supervisor was assigned to each train with responsibility for opening and closing the train doors, communicating with the BN conductor, making on-board announcements, and serving as point of contact for Ambassadors on-board the train. Whenever possible, two Ambassadors were assigned per car.

The RTA held three Ambassador training classes at the Seattle Amtrak station. The training was provided by Amtrak (safety, ADA and security), Bombardier (car familiarity), and the RTA (communications and general responsibilities). The training included an on-board session to explain the various safety and other features of the cars, and a classroom portion, to describe the RTA and *TRY RAIL!*, customer service

and assisting passengers with special needs. An Ambassador Training Manual was provided each Ambassador. Once the service was underway the requirement of formal training was dropped, out of necessity, and new Ambassadors were trained on the job by other Ambassadors, with particular focus on responding to persons with disabilities.

In addition to providing information about on-board amenities, answering questions regarding the *TRY RAIL!* project, counting the number of passengers, and providing for the safety and comfort of passengers, the Ambassadors served as an extension of the RTA. They distributed and collected over 4,000 comment cards that provided the RTA with valuable information from passengers about their reactions to the *TRY RAIL!* service and commuter rail in general.

The Ambassador program was an unqualified success and the most noted feature of the program. The result is a tribute to the tireless efforts of Ken Deans, Barbara Gilliland, and the approximately 100 Ambassadors that volunteered their time, enthusiasm and energy to *TRY RAIL!*

## **Passenger amenities**

The RTA, furthering its objective of demonstrating the potential comfort and convenience of rail travel, built as many amenities into the service as it could in the short lead time available. This objective provided an opportunity to gain the support of companies such as Starbucks Coffee, Cellular One, The Seattle Times, Tacoma News Tribune, Valley Daily News, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. All offered complimentary services on-board the train.

Ambassadors each had a cellular phone that passengers were free to use for calls within the Puget Sound region. Coffee and newspapers were provided on the Sonics and commuter services. And other businesses such as KFC offered coupons, drawings and other items to passengers on-board the train.

These added features were well received. Although they would not likely be offered as complimentary items in a permanent service, passenger's reaction should be considered when designing services to be included in a permanent service.

## **Information distribution**

A wealth of printed information was distributed on the train, including schedules for local connecting bus services, *TRY RAIL!* schedules and project information, an explanation of the RTA plan, maps and tourist information on cities served by the demonstration project, and information about sponsors.

Tables were quickly designed and installed in some of the coaches as coffee stations. Shelves were installed at the end of the cars to serve as public information stations. In addition, Ambassadors quickly learned that items were of most interest and carried some with them in aprons which also accommodated cellular phones and comment cards.

## **Lessons learned**

1. **Ambassador services are critical during start up** — The most noted comments received on the project were from passengers commenting on the Ambassadors or



how much they enjoyed other on-board services. This type of program would seem very worthwhile with the start-up of any new transit service. However, even with that there were some major lessons learned during the process that may make successive ones more manageable.

2. **Customer orientation** — The successful design and implementation of passenger services is a complicated time consuming enterprise that requires people, communications and logistical skills. Railroad experience may be helpful but is not essential.
3. **Corporate support is possible** — There are significant opportunities for corporate sponsorship that require a minimum of six months to develop.
4. **Good organization is essential** — Daily pre-departure meetings were essential for providing information, coordination, and distribution of supplies, and assignment. It was too often assumed, incorrectly, that the position of Ambassador did not require more than showing up.
5. **Information services need to be incorporated into equipment design** — Staff need be designated with responsibility for storage and resupply of materials and literature. Storage on the GO equipment was limited to the cab car located at the end of the train — a long walk on a 13-car train. Storage, coffee service, brochure racks and other design features are issues that need be resolved when designing vehicle specifications.

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# Local transit agency coordination

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The CRDP received important support from Everett Transit, Community Transit, Metro Transit and Pierce Transit. Each provided circulation and public information services and served as a transportation back up in the event of a train break down. Fortunately there were none.

As with local political jurisdictions, involvement of local bus transit providers early in the process is fundamentally important. The demonstration project provided an opportunity for the RTA to learn how a rail element could be integrated into an existing transit network. Significant issues include bus scheduling and routing to meet trains, and providing information to passengers for either completing trips or for reaching other destinations.

Each station had a bus service element. In Tacoma, Pierce Transit provided local transit circulation from surrounding available parking areas to the station. In Seattle, Metro already provided service through the downtown area via the ride free zone. In addition, Metro provided special bus circulation during the four weeks of the AM commuter trips from King Street Station through the downtown area at the ask of the RTA, to demonstrate to passengers how convenient connections can be between rail and bus.

The remaining stations provided parking and a bus service. Establishing these train-bus connections provided both the RTA and local transit agencies an opportunity to test these services. In most cases the shuttles were provided as additional service to the train from existing park-and-ride facilities and served communities as distant as Marysville. Information regarding these services was not broadly disseminated, therefore reducing its effectiveness.

Each of the transit agencies also provided service supervisors at stations within its service area. This was an invaluable addition to the service, providing the function of station Ambassador when one was not available (giving directions, answering questions, watching for passenger safety ) as well as monitoring shuttle bus operations.

## Lessons learned

1. **Involve bus operations planners early** — Involvement of a representative from the scheduling and operations departments of each transit agency served by commuter rail is very important. They are knowledgeable about the day to day operations, essential to quickly developing service plans and responding to late developing issues.
2. **Service coordination is essential** — Coordination with transit providers is essential. Providing local transit personnel at each stop is crucial during the early stages of the project to facilitate the integration between bus and rail for the passengers.



3. **Passengers will use bus shuttle services** — Frequent circulation of scheduled shuttles prior to a train departure worked reasonably well. Shuttles that operated on a one trip schedule (either catch this bus or wait an hour for the next one) were not as successful.

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# Coordination with local jurisdictions

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The CRDP provided the RTA with an opportunity to develop different working relationships with local cities. Prior to RTA sponsorship of *TRY RAIL!*, involvement with local communities had been primarily at the planning level. *TRY RAIL!*, gave the RTA an opportunity to actually demonstrate commuter rail service in these communities.

The CRDP uncovered a variety of local issues during the development of the project, including: concerns about platforms (location, lighting, trash, security); parking; dates and times of services; and signs. Although it was not feasible to construct temporary stations at all locations to be served by a permanent system, the RTA made every effort to provide as many opportunities for these jurisdictions to participate in project planning and learn about the commuter rail service.

Primary issues discussed with officials in the five communities served by temporary stations included:

- **Parking** — In Everett and Edmonds, parking was leased. Public parking was available in Kent, and park-and-ride facilities were in Tacoma. Where parking was not available, local transit options were explored.
- **Signs** — A sign plan and examples sign designs were presented to each location for review. Completed signs were actually installed by local staff.
- **Information about cities served** — Many cities were interested in providing passengers with information about their cities. These brochures and handouts were incorporated into the on-board information stations in each coach car.
- **Local coordination** — As project development came closer to start-up, the inevitable isolated issues came up. Contacts developed during the planning phase were available to assist in resolving issues as they arose. Examples included the need for a law enforcement presence during the hours of service and for monitoring trains that were stored in Everett and Tacoma, the need for trash receptacles, and temporary lighting.
- **Additional services** — Some jurisdictions not directly served by *TRY RAIL!* were provided with static car displays or excursion services. These services required make-shift platforms, security arrangements, publicity, parking, and provisions for passenger waiting and circulation, all issues that required coordination with the involved cities and the transit agencies.

## Lessons learned

1. **Involvement and clear communication channels** — Involvement of local jurisdictions early in the planning process and designation of a person with authority to resolve rail related issues is very important. The early development of a



working relationship can help resolve issues quickly and speed project planning. Conversely, providing local officials with an RTA point of control establishes an equally important communication link.

2. **Local issues** — CRDP planning for station development provided the RTA with a better understanding of issues considered important to local staff.
3. **Transit planning** — The RTA gained considerable experience in developing and evaluating alternative station area designs and pedestrian, traffic, and feeder bus circulation patterns.

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# Service plan, marketing and ridership

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## **The *TRY RAIL!* service plan**

*TRY RAIL!* services were designed to provide as many people as possible with an opportunity to experience commuter rail. To accomplish this objective, the CRDP offered three broadly different demonstration services between Everett and Seattle over a six-week period. Each service was tailored to different potential types of commuters, events and opportunities.

### **Weekday rush-hour commuter service**

Twice-daily rush hour commuter service, designed for commuters and the general public, was operated for four weeks — two weeks from the north and two weeks from the south. The north service (Everett-Edmonds-Seattle) operated Monday through Friday between January 30 and February 10, 1995. The south service (Tacoma-Kent-Seattle) operated Monday through Friday between February 21 and March 3, 1995. A total of 76 one-way trips were provided.

### **Sonics service**

Service to nine Sonics games was offered between January 28 and March 16, 1994. Four of these trips were combined with afternoon commuter service to Tacoma. With the exception of the Saturday, January 28 inaugural trip, the Sonics service was limited to weekday games.

### **Excursion services**

Thirty-two one-way mid-week and weekend excursion trips were designed to offer families, senior citizens, students, business groups and members of the general public who did not commute or attend basketball games, an opportunity to experience a ride on a commuter train.

## **Marketing *TRY RAIL!***

Marie Keister, Pierce Transit Public Information Officer, was responsible for coordinating *TRY RAIL!* marketing efforts include overseeing the development of the *TRY RAIL!* logo, name, marketing plan, and a media schedule for the CRDP.

The *TRY RAIL!* marketing task was complicated by the fact that commuter and Sonics schedules were not finalized until January 18, less than ten days prior to inauguration of the services. Excursion services were not finalized until February 10, ten days before the first excursion. The shortness of these lead times prevented the RTA from taking advantage of most sponsorship opportunities and miss chances to cross-promote with other transit events, or capitalize on the promotion opportunities that did present themselves.



Notwithstanding these challenges and the need to coordinate *TRY RAIL!* marketing and promotional support activities with four independent local transit agencies, the RTA developed and implemented a remarkably successful marketing plan. *TRY RAIL!* attracted over 51,000 boardings.

Elements of the CRDP marketing plan included:

- **Name, logo and colors** — The CRDP needed a name that would immediately explain what the RTA was doing inviting the public to come along for the trial run. Cf2GS, a Seattle-based advertising agency, working under the direction of Senior Vice President Cynthia Hartwig, volunteered to help develop the CRDP name, logo and colors that would boldly communicate the nature of the project.

The name, *TRY RAIL!*, and a typeface that conveyed a distinct, memorable project identity, were selected by the RTA's Public Involvement Committee from ideas developed by Cf2GS and the RTA communications staff. It appeared on all *TRY RAIL!* promotional materials, including signs, train decals, posters, on-board staff uniforms, and advertising materials. The identity was clear and stood out well during the extensive media coverage of the CRDP.

A compelling message was needed. Believing that the product was very strong and did not require embellishment, the RTA team kept the messages simple and direct: "Try the train to work." "Try the train to shop." And, "Try the train for fun." By using the word "try", an attempt was made to convey that *TRY RAIL!* was a demonstration that did not mirror the faster, stop-at-more-places, serve-more-communities proposed permanent service that would be provided in new equipment on upgraded rights-of-way. All advertising copy conveyed the experimental nature of the product to avoid promising more than could be delivered.

- **Communication of objectives** — A fun, festive and inclusive invitation was communicated to the widest possible variety of audiences to experience commuter rail. This message was coupled with on board information that the service did not mirror future permanent service that could be provided with new equipment and on upgraded rights-of-way. By maximizing the number of people involved in *TRY RAIL!* the RTA was able to obtain information regarding customer preferences, that will be valuable in designing future commuter rail services. A report documenting over 4,000 public comment cards has been prepared to capture this information.
- **Corporate support** — The introduction of commuter rail into a community is a very public event that attracts a great deal of attention. Trains are bright shiny objects that serve as magnets for people and the media. This potential for attention is not lost on persons with advertising and public and governmental relations responsibilities, particularly if their companies or clients offer services that can be sold, promoted, given away or related to the trains.

The RTA planned to aggressively seek corporate sponsors. Corporate responses to early inquiries were encouraging. RTA representatives were encouraged to make contact again once funding was secured and a service plan was established. Delays in funding and the inability to finalize a railroad operating agreement and service schedules until days before the service was to start prevented the RTA from effectively capitalizing on

corporate promotional opportunities. By the time the RTA was in a position to commit to a service, days before the end of the year, corporate budgets were committed; and, where funds were available, too little time was left to properly plan a promotion.

Nevertheless, two significant corporate sponsors committed on days' notice and made a significant contribution to *TRY RAIL!* service. Cellular One (now AT&T) provided cell phones and free air time to passengers; Starbucks provided free coffee on all commuter and Sonics trains; KUBE, a popular Seattle radio station provided live traffic reports from a traffic reporter stationed on morning and evening *TRY RAIL!* trains. In addition, KZOK, another Seattle radio station, independently arrived on two morning commuter services with Egg McMuffins and donuts.

## Ridership

*TRY RAIL!* accommodated approximately 69,000 riders between January 28 and March 16, 1995.

<u>Service</u>	<u>One-Way Trips</u>	<u>Boardings</u>
Commuter Trips	76	16,600
Excursion	32	47,900
Sonic Services	<u>14</u>	<u>4,600</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	122	69,200

## The commuter service

The Everett-Edmonds-Seattle north service attracted more passengers than expected; the Tacoma-Kent-Seattle south service attracted fewer than expected, although more than between Everett-Edmonds and Seattle.

The following reasons are educated guesses at best, but may include:

- Bus commuters from Tacoma are particularly well served by frequent bus express service from centrally located park-and-ride lots. They are a dedicated and stable group. To commute by *TRY RAIL!*, this group had to take a bus to the train from the Tacoma park-and-ride lot (there is limited parking available at the Tacoma railroad station), *TRY RAIL!* to Seattle, and for most, take a second bus from the Seattle railroad station to downtown Seattle. Travel time on the Seattle Express buses is approximately the same as for the train alone and twenty minutes quicker when bus and waiting time was added at each end. It was particularly important to communicate to this group that a permanent service would be much different – faster trains, parking, and stops closer to downtown Seattle.
- Passengers from Kent were better served and this was reflected by ridership. A 150-car park-and-ride facility was located next to the Kent railroad station with an additional 750 stalls one-quarter mile away. The train trip was approximately 20 minutes faster than the bus.
- Amtrak sponsored research that showed that *TRY RAIL!* attracted new riders more than existing express bus riders. This was the result of the alignment along Puget



Sound being fairly far removed from the more centrally located I-5 express bus service.

- The north service ran parallel to Puget Sound and offered a sweeping view of the water and the Olympic mountains. Most of the south service ran through urban and industrial areas. The view from the train may well have accounted for more passengers on the north service.
- Bus riders from the north and south were more willing to experiment with the return trips at night, perhaps reflecting a willingness of customers to try the train when they did not have the pressure of getting to work on time.

## **The Sonics service**

The Sonics service did not attract significant ridership. The CRDP did not begin service until half way through the Sonics season, by that time ticket holders had either disposed of their tickets or settled on other transportation options, including a boat service with food, alcohol and capacity for several hundred passengers, private and public bus services, and cars. Because of budget limitations, the RTA concentrated the advertising budget on promoting the commuter service. Some of the RTA staff believe that the ridership would have been somewhat greater had the service begun at the start of the season and been more actively promoted.

## **The excursion services**

The excursion services were an unqualified success, exceeding expectations by a wide margin. This success followed from the wide range of choices offered to passengers — midweek, early morning, weekend, north, south — and reflected the dedicated planning efforts of RTA staff to reach as many groups as possible. Trips included early morning short pre-work trips for business groups, mid-day trips for school children (including one-way trips coordinated with school buses), a weekend “art express” with street artists on each car, and simply running the cars up and down the tracks on weekend as an event. The nine-to-thirteen car weekend trains were filled to capacity with people traveling from Everett and Tacoma to Seattle.

Excursion planning was particularly difficult because it took place at the same time as the service plan negotiations between the RTA and the BN. Plan revisions were considered on a daily basis and were not finalized until February 10, ten days before the first excursion. Prior to that time staff could not firmly commit to a schedule – times or route – resulting in the loss of lead time required for promotion (organization newsletters, bulletins, weekly and monthly publications, etc.) This meant loss of potential riders who required earlier notice.

## **Lessons learned**

Four thousand comment cards and the Amtrak-sponsored research will provide a wealth of information to the RTA when it designs a permanent survey. Some highlights include:

1. Travel time will be important. The experience with ridership from Kent and Tacoma demonstrates that the RTA, the railroads and local jurisdictions will have to optimize track/signal improvements, and speed limits.

2. On-platform and on-board service were viewed as desirable both the users and by the providers. Vendors will need to be included in planning for a permanent service.
3. Coordination with local transit service at both the origin and destination will be critical to the permanent services' success.
4. Each transit agency's customer information system must be capable of providing complete information.



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# The Americans with Disabilities Act

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Project planners used their best efforts to ensure that people with disabilities had access to *TRY RAIL!* services. Persons with disabilities were involved in accessible planning, tested project facilities before commencement of service, and made useful suggestions for improvements. Bob Carroll of Metro's Accessible Services Service was particularly helpful. He commended project planners "who not only don't question the need for [access] but actually find ways to make it better than the minimum requirements. I just spent two days with a visitor with the RTA who was amazed at our inter-departmental cooperation and spirit of problem solving."

## Platforms

Every commuter platform was constructed with a ramp and railing that accommodated wheel chairs. In addition, when platforms without ramps were used, or more than one ADA accessible car was included in a consist, portable lifts purchased by the FTA for the CRDP were stationed at the platform to provide access.

Access from the ramps and lifts to the trains was gained by a portable platform that on-board staff put in place at each stop.

## Equipment

Although the seventeen-year old Bombardier equipment was not fully ADA accessible (rest rooms could not be retrofitted), the RTA removed doorway stanchions and seats on the lower level of cars to accommodate four wheelchairs. Each consist had at least one wheelchair accessible car. Passengers with disabilities were accommodated without incident and to the staff's knowledge, no persons with disabilities were denied service.

## Lesson learned

1. **Involve expertise in serving people with disabilities** —This expertise should be involved in every stage of planning for passenger movements including equipment design and acquisition, the planning, construction, testing and implementation of platforms, and staff training.
2. **Accessible facilities can be provided easily** —Accessibility provisions can be incorporated easily and with minimal cost if the commitment to do so is made early and communicated clearly to all parties.

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# Consultants

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Consultants, particularly those with railroad expertise, and event planning experience, were invaluable in the planning and implementation of *TRY RAIL!* At the time the CRDP was planned, the larger RTA project was in the preliminary development stage and, if approved by voters, would have resulted in a \$6.7 billion 16-year project, one of the largest public works projects in the country. Given the common sponsorship, and the desire for participation in the long term project, there was no shortage of consultants interested in a CRDP involvement.

In the earliest planning stages, Tom Matoff, the Executive Director of the RTA, suggested that railroad consultants be associated with the project. His suggestion resulted in railroad consulting firms nationwide being asked to consider bidding on a contract to immediately place a railroad consultant in Seattle to assist with project planning. Given the urgency and specialization required, the RTA was fortunate to obtain the services of two talented railroad experts, Charles C. DeWeese of Deleuw Cather, and James Stoetzel, through Huitt Zollars – both individuals made significant contributions to the shaping and operation of the project.

DeWeese and Stoetzel had extensive nationwide industry contacts, DeWeese somewhat better connected with the UP and Stoetzel with the BN. These contacts were extremely useful to the project, cutting through corporate and governmental bureaucracies.

In addition, a large number of consultants volunteered to work on the CRDP, many of them working on specific assignments including the construction of scheduling and cost models. The majority of the services offered were not used because it was simply impossible to effectively define and manage a large number of talented volunteers in the short time available. Had more time been available, considerable additional consultant assistance would have been available to the project.

## Scope of work

Unlike the design of a station, alignment or operating plan, or the creation of a railroad cost model, the CRDP product that the consultants were asked to deliver did not lend itself to precise definition. The scope of work attached to each of their contracts was drafted in consultant boilerplate. All were clear that what was being purchased in effect was time to help make the technical aspects of the project happen — and these aspects remained in a fairly constant state of flux due to ongoing changes described elsewhere in this report. Given the considerable demands on the very few people involved in CRDP and the fairly general and overlapping scope of work that each contracted to provide, the division of responsibilities between consultants was less than clear.

The lack of clarity was also a function of the nature of the work asked. Both were involved in virtually all aspects of the project at one time or another, although DeWeese tended to focus his efforts on platform design and the creation of a cost model and



Stoetzel on equipment readiness and maintenance, on-board services, and FRA compliance. Both analyzed the railroad proposals, advised on negotiating strategies, and participated in the creation and revision of schedules.

## **Reporting and communications**

The consultants reported to the Project Director. Communications were on an as-needed basis. This proved to be increasingly awkward as the project unfolded because of the different styles and expectations of the people involved. The Project Director wanted the complete, perhaps excessive, documentation of the projects development – he believed the ingredients of both successes and failures would be invaluable to the planning of a permanent service. This was not effectively communicated to the consultants, who was tapped out with operational concerns and schooled in a railroad culture based on “exception” reporting.

Satisfactory reporting relationships evolved over the life of the project, adapted to the styles of the people involved. Had more time been spent defining the form and content of expected communications in the first days of the relationships, misunderstandings could have been avoided, significant time would have been saved, and better documentation would have been obtained. Notwithstanding the concerns of the Project Director, the form and content of the consultants’ reports provide a reasonably complete documentation of the project, particularly in the later stages.

Obtaining information about failings or that tends to unfavorably portray railroad industry institutional partners, in writing, was particularly difficult. One consultant (not DeWeese or Stoetzel) advised that the range of potential clients for consultants with very specific railroad knowledge is limited and that he would be reluctant to communicate anything negative, in writing, about a potential significant client. It might well be that this is an institutional constraint endemic to an industry with limited numbers of clients.

## **Relationship to third parties**

Although both DeWeese and Stoetzel were both known to be consultants, technically independent of the RTA, the nature of their hands-on work led them to be considered as members of the CRPD staff. Thus, information provided to them by a railroad, Amtrak, representative of a local government or other third party was considered to be known by the RTA. This assumption created the potential for misunderstandings, particularly so given the loosely structured reporting arrangements.

## **Lessons learned**

1. **Railroad expertise is essential to the planning of commuter rail** —This point has been made throughout the project. This expertise will necessarily be provided by consultants in a short-term project.
2. **The form and content of consultant reporting need to be established on arrival and closely monitored by the agency throughout the relationship.**
3. **Duplication of consultant efforts** —With overlapping assignments, some duplication of effort is inevitable. Better reporting in the early stages of the CRDP could have minimized duplication.

4. **Using consultants for oversight of their potential future clients has limitations —**  
This situation is inevitable in the relatively small world of railroads. Defining up front both for consultants and contractors what kinds of reports will be prepared will minimize the problem.



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# Appendices

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# Appendix 1 —Commuter Rail Demonstration Project budget

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## Regional Transit Authority Commuter Rail Demonstration Project final budget

Equipment		\$ 471,229
Lease	\$234,636	
Transportation	148,529	
Property Insurance	88, 064	
Temporary platforms		412,068
Railroad operating		481,235
Insurance		345,616
Consultants		260,035
Maintenance		142,321
Marketing		163,507
Miscellaneous		101,973
Revenue from Sonics Fares		<u>&lt;12,776</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>		\$2,365,226



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## **Appendix 2 —RTA *TRY RAIL!* research preliminary report**

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## APPENDIX 2

**RTA TryRail Research Snapshot**

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**Summary of 2/10/95 On-Board Everett Trains Survey**

On February 10, 1995 riders on the last two out-bound trains of the two-week Snohomish County Try-Rail demonstration commuter service were surveyed regarding their travel patterns and opinions regarding the TryRail commuting experience. This research study is sponsored by Amtrak. The passengers were surveyed utilizing self administered questionnaire (Attached.). This "Snapshot" report is based on the input from approximately 150 completed questionnaires. These are preliminary results and do not include the full amount of questionnaires expected to be returned nor has the data been subjected to any traditional statistical checking. This is not a comprehensive report.

**Overall Satisfaction High**

Riders were asked to rate their "overall satisfaction" with RTA's TryRail service on a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 meaning "*completely unsatisfactory*" and 10 meaning "*excellent*". On this scale, respondents rated their overall experience with the service at 9.3.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to rate various specific aspects of service quality on the same 0 to 10 scale as above.

On this scale riders gave:

- on-time performance a 8.5 rating.
- line staff (conductors & ambassadors) 8.5.
- cleanliness 8.48.
- on-time arrival performance a 8.08 rating (Note: most of the questionnaires were completed on a train before it had arrived. First-time riders would have a difficult time evaluating on-time performance. This factor will be analyzed in the final report).
- seat comfort was the lowest rating at 7.7.

Passengers were also asked in an open-ended question what they liked most about riding TryRail. Their responses were coded into logical grouping related to groups of service characteristics. The category "other" relates is an amalgamation of responses, none of which were mentioned by more than two percent of the



respondents. The one exception were various comments that did not directly relate to service characteristics concerning the upcoming funding vote where a number of people wrote-in positive comments. The characteristics that stood out as what passengers liked most about riding TryRail included:

- 33% made comments regarding the scenery or beauty of the ride. (This is not surprising considering the spectacular views of the Olympic Mountains and Puget Sound afforded by the train's unique shoreline route.
- Comfort, relating to smooth ride, quiet and overall atmosphere of the train; was cited by 30% of the passengers responding.
- Avoiding driving (Traffic problems, stop and go, parking, etc.) was mentioned by 28% of the respondents.
- The relaxing nature of the train ride was mentioned by 24% of the passengers surveyed.
- The reliability and speed of the service was mentioned by 17% of the respondents as what they liked most. Reliability in this case refers to mentions of on-time performance as well as respondent comparisons to the unpredictable nature of auto travel (especially on I-5).
- The cleanliness of equipment was mentioned by 8% of respondents.

Passengers were also asked to list what they "disliked most" about TryRail. Most of the comments related to providing more rail service and bus service connections to stations. These comments often included the caveat that the respondent knew that he/she was riding a demonstration project and expected that full service would offer more frequent bus and rail service.

Again multiple responses were allowed though the total number of items do not add up to over 100% because many responses listed no "dislikes" about TryRail.

Characteristics of the TryRail experience passenger respondents disliked most were:

- Bus connections to the TryRail stations. 14% mentioned the lack of convenient connections as their primary problem with TryRail.
- Slow operating speeds was mentioned by 13% of those surveyed.
- A complaint probably unique to the demonstration nature of the service concerned "Kids running around the train blowing those damned whistles", 10% of respondents mentioned this problem.
- Seat comfort was cited by 10% of the respondents.

- Infrequent trains, including the lack of evening and mid-day trains, were mentioned by 8% of the passengers.
- Just over 2% listed various complaints about station locations or conditions as aspects of the TryRail experience they disliked the most.

Respondents were also asked to rate how various additional service amenities might influence their future use of commuter rail service. They were asked to rate each of 11 amenities on a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 meaning "not at all important" and 10 meaning "absolutely critical" to their future use of commuter rail service.

In order of importance riders rated the following service enhancements:

- All day service, 7.5.
- Provision of Park and rides, 7.4
- Direct bus connections to train service, 7.2.
- Addition of Weekend service, 6.1.
- Addition of evening service, 5.7.
- Better seating, 5.2.
- Addition of work tables or trays, 5.1.
- Food and beverage service, on-board, 5; at stations, 4.8.
- On-board cellular phones, 3.1.
- Station valet service (laundry, auto parking/ care, film, grocery services etc.) 2.7.

## How did they used to commute.

Riders were asked how they usually make the trip they were now making by train. Fifty-two percent said they normally drove and 42% said they took the bus. The remaining six percent stated either this was not a normal trip for them or some other combination of conveyances including ferry.

Riders were also asked how they got to the train station from their home for the trip they were currently making. Thirty-one percent said they took the bus, the



remaining respondents listed driving, being dropped-off, walking or ferry as their way to the station.

## **To Come**

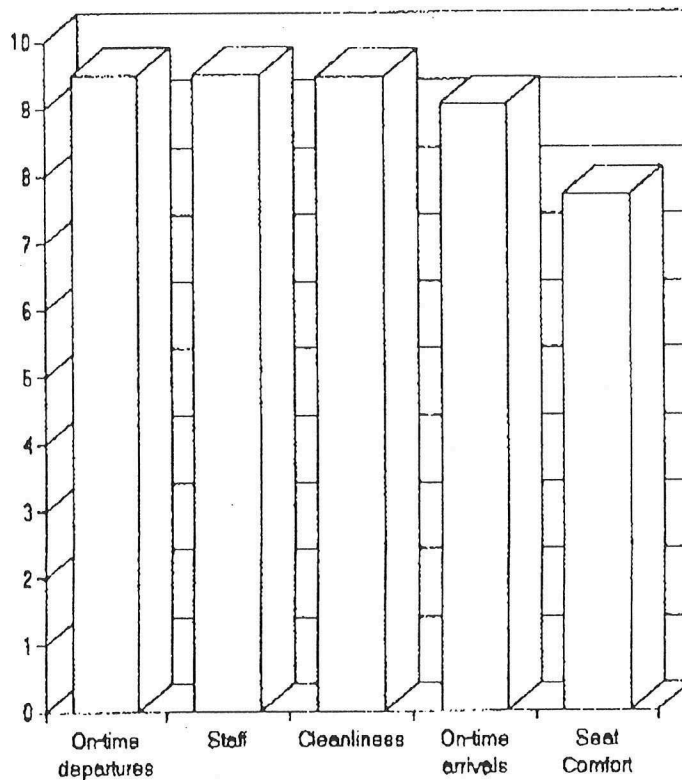
The final research report for this Amtrak sponsored survey will include results from all the surveys completed on both the Snohomish County and Pierce County portions of the demonstration project. The final report will also include more detailed statistical analysis as well as a full set of cross-tabs to provide data for future planning.

Riders were asked to rate the quality of various TryRail service attributes on a scale of 0 to 10 with "0" meaning "completely unsatisfactory" and "10" meaning "excellent".

Overall rating of the TryRail experience, 9.3.

<i>Quality Ratings</i>	
On-time departures	9.5
Staff	9.5
Cleanliness	9.46
On-time arrivals	9.06
Seat Comfort	7.7

## Performance Ratings



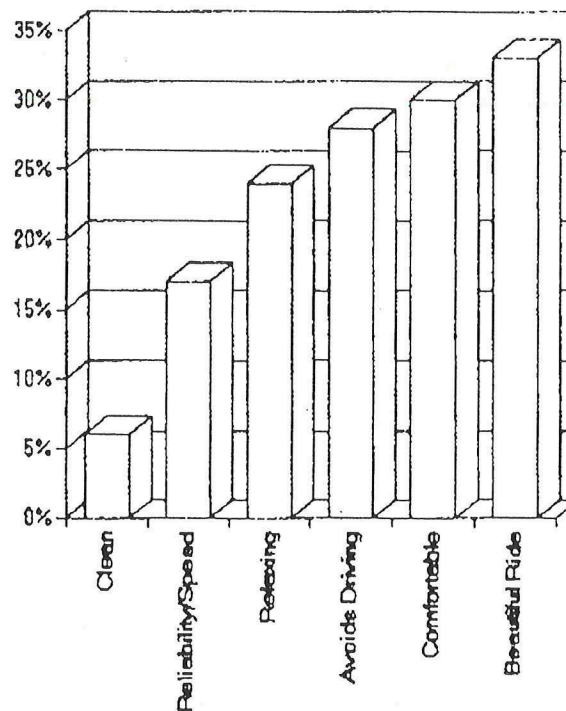


Respondents were asked, in an open ended question:

*"What do you like most about riding RTA's TryRail?"*

<i>Attributes liked most</i>	
Clean	6%
Reliability/Speed	17%
Relaxing	24%
Avoids Driving	28%
Comfortable	30%
Beautiful Ride	33%
Other	22%

**Riders Most Liked**

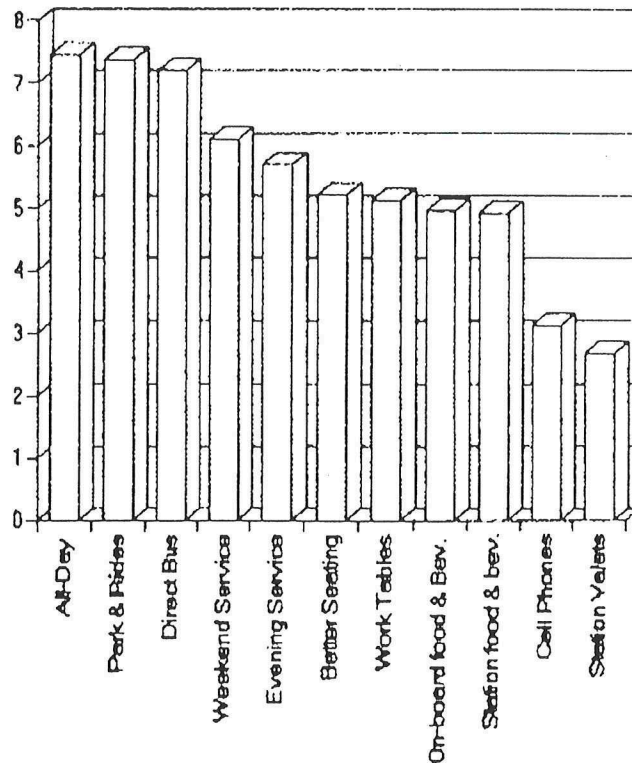


Respondents were asked to rate how important possible service enhancements would be to their use of commuter rail service

*Preference for possible service enhancements*

All-Day	7.5
Park & Rides	7.4
Direct Bus	7.2
Weekend Service	6.1
Evening Service	5.7
Better Seating	5.2
Work Tables	6.1
On-board food & Bev.	5.0
Station food & bev.	4.9
Cell Phones	3.1
Station Valets	2.7

*Service Enhancement Preferences*



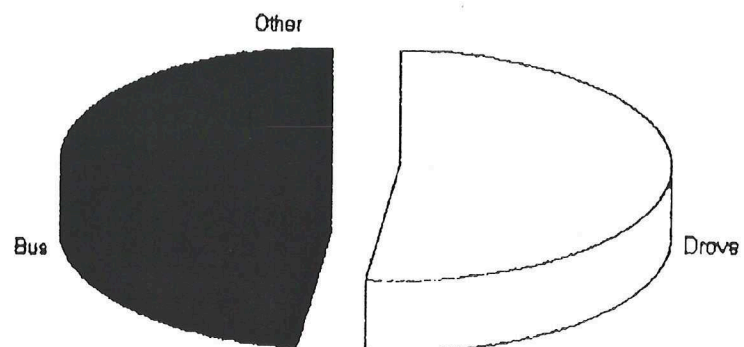


## MODELS

Rider's were asked how they normally  
commuted to their destination before TryRail.

*Normal commute mode.*

Drove	52%
Bus	42%
Other	6%

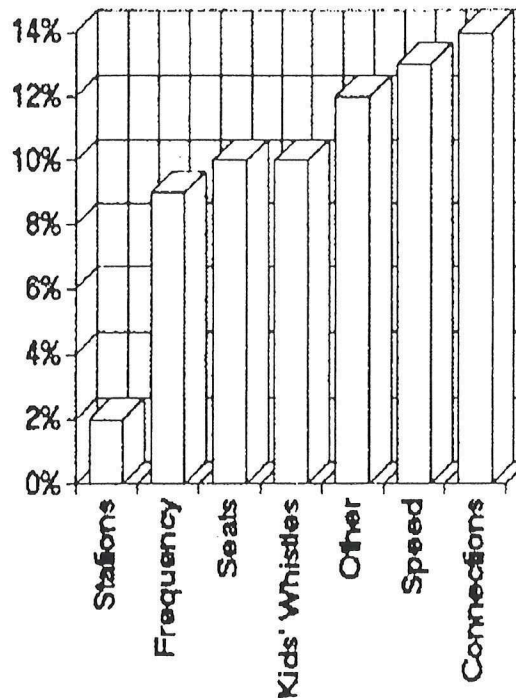
**Normal Travel Mode**

Respondents were asked, in an open ended question:

*"What do you dislike like most about riding RTA's TryRail?"*

Attributes disliked the most	
Stations	2%
Frequency	9%
Seats	10%
Kids' Whistles	10%
Other	12%
Speed	13%
Connections	14%

### Needs Improvement

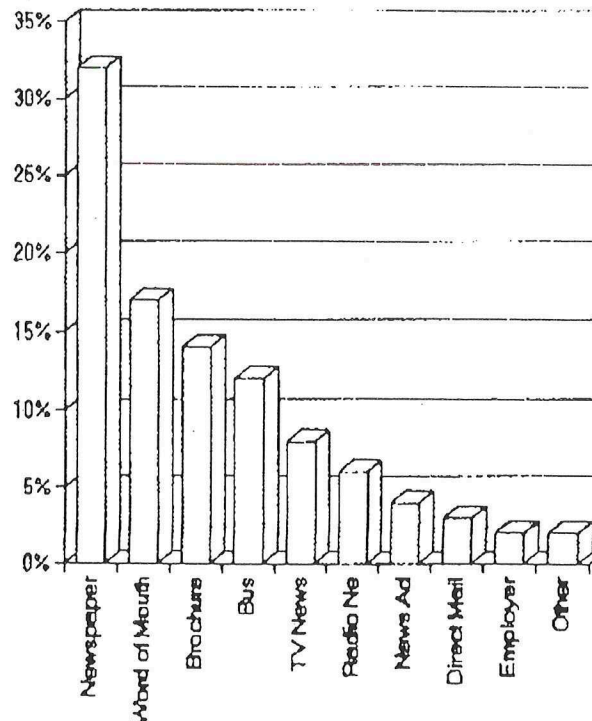




Respondents were asked to identify where they first heard about RTA TryRail service.

Information Sources	
Newspaper	32%
Word of Mouth	17%
Brochure	14%
Bus	12%
TV News	8%
Radio Ne	6%
News Ad	4%
Direct Mail	3%
Employer	2%
Other	2%

## Information Sources



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## **Appendix 3 —Schedules and sample marketing materials**

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# Try the train to the Sonics.

## TRY THE TRAIN TO THE SONICS GAMES

See what a commuter train system could be like for Pierce, King and Snohomish counties. The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is evaluating commuter rail equipment and operations—and is offering you a chance to take a test ride with us.

Here's how you can try the train: Catch the train in Everett at the temporary Pacific and Smith station. In Edmonds at the Amtrak station, at King Street Station in Seattle, or the temporary station in Kent.

Walk to the Tacoma Dome from the platform at Puyallup Avenue at E-F streets, or about 3 blocks. The games on Feb. 20, 22, 24 and 27 will only have service from Seattle & Kent, not Everett. Passengers will be charged \$10 for the round trip or \$5 from Kent. Order your tickets from TicketMaster at 628-0888.

The Victoria Clipper sails from Seattle's Pier 69 to Sonics Tacoma games. Call 448-5000 for more information. Gray Line of Seattle offers express Sonics motorcoach service from 8 locations throughout greater Seattle. Call 626-5208 for reservations.

### TryRail Sonics Schedule

LA Lakers—Jan 28	Charlotte Hornets—Feb 27
Golden State Warriors—Feb 14	Golden State Warriors—Mar 6
LA Lakers—Feb 20	Boston Celtics—Mar 14
Minnesota Timberwolves—Feb 22	Miami Heat—Mar 16
Denver Nuggets—Feb 24	

For more information about riding the train for free, call 1-800-201-4900.

### SONICS SERVICE (9 home games in Tacoma Dome)

#### Southbound

	Everett	Edmonds	Seattle	Kent	Tacoma
Sat Jan 28*	9:30 am	9:59 am	10:44 am	11:13 am	11:48 am
Mon Feb 20, Wed Feb 22, Fri Feb 24, Mon Feb 27			5:30 pm	5:59 pm	6:34 pm
Tues Feb 14, Mon Mar 6, Tues Mar 14, Thurs Mar 16	4:00 pm	4:29 pm	5:20 pm	5:49 pm	6:24 pm

#### Northbound

	Tacoma	Kent	Seattle	Edmonds	Everett
Sat Jan 28*	3:30 pm	4:06 pm	4:39 pm	5:19 pm	5:48 pm
Mon Feb 20, Wed Feb 22, Fri Feb 24, Mon Feb 27	9:45 pm	10:18 pm	10:49 pm		
Tues Feb 14, Mon Mar 6, Tues Mar 14, Thurs Mar 16	9:45 pm	10:21 pm	10:54 pm	11:34 pm	12:03 am

\*12:30 pm tip off, all others are 7:00 pm

This information is available in accessible formats upon request at 1-800-201-4900.





## TIMETABLES

### Snohomish County Commuter Rail Demo

Monday, Jan 30—Friday, Feb 3  
Monday, Feb 6—Friday, Feb 10

#### Southbound

	Everett depart	Edmonds arrive	Seattle arrive
Train #1	6:00 am	6:29 am	7:08 am
Train #2	7:00 am	7:29 am	8:08 am

#### Northbound

	Seattle depart	Edmonds arrive	Everett arrive
Train #1	4:10 pm	4:49 pm	5:18 pm
Train #2	5:30 pm	6:09 pm	6:38 pm

### Sonics Service (9 home games in Tacoma Dome)

#### Southbound

	Everett	Edmonds	Seattle	Kent	Tacoma
Sat Jan 28*	9:30 am	9:59 am	10:44 am	11:13 am	11:48 am
Mon Feb 20, Wed Feb 22, Fri Feb 24, Mon Feb 27			5:30 pm	5:59 pm	6:34 pm
Tues Feb 14, Mon Mar 6, Tues Mar 14, Thurs Mar 16	4:00 pm	4:29 pm	5:20 pm	5:49 pm	6:24 pm

#### Northbound

	Tacoma	Kent	Seattle	Edmonds	Everett
Sat Jan 28*	3:30 pm	4:06 pm	4:39 pm	5:19 pm	5:48 pm
Wed Feb 22, Fri Feb 24, Mon Feb 27, Mon Mar 6, 3/10	9:45 pm	10:18 pm	10:49 pm		
Tues Feb 14, Mon Feb 20, 3/6, Tues Mar 14, Thurs Mar 16	9:45 pm	10:21 pm	10:54 pm	11:34 pm	12:03 pm

\*12:30 pm tip off, all others are 7:00 pm

### Pierce/South King County Rail Demo

Tuesday, Feb 21—Friday, Feb 24  
Monday, Feb 27—Friday, March 3

#### Northbound

	Tacoma depart	Kent arrive	Seattle arrive
Train #1	6:00 am	6:34 am	7:00 am
Train #2	7:00 am	7:34 am	8:00 am

#### Southbound

	Seattle depart	Kent arrive	Tacoma arrive
Train #1	4:30 pm	4:59 pm	5:34 pm
Train #2	5:30 pm	5:57 pm	6:30 pm

This information is available in accessible formats upon request at 1-800-201-4900.

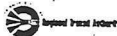
## Special Thanks

Your chance to test ride a train is made possible by grants from the Washington State Attorney General's Office and the US Federal Transit Administration. Many other agencies, businesses and individuals also helped make this demonstration happen.

This is a demonstration only and will not mirror the actual service that could be provided by the proposed Regional Transit System to be voted on by the public on March 14, 1995.

Miles of commuter rail and light rail are part of a proposed transit package for King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. Actual commuter rail service would be more extensive than the TryRail demo — more stations, more frequent trains and service running in both directions. Commuter trains would begin running all day on existing tracks between Tacoma and Seattle within two or three years of a positive public vote and be extended to Everett and Lakewood within a year after initial service begins. Light rail would be up and running throughout the Puget Sound by 2006.

A cooperative project of:



# Try the train to work.



## Try the train to work for free.

See what a commuter train system could be like for Pierce, King and Snohomish counties. The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is evaluating commuter rail equipment and operations — and is offering you a chance to take a test ride with us.

Here's how you can try out the train for free: On weekdays from January 30 to February 10, the train will be serving passengers from Everett and Edmonds to Seattle. Then from February 21 to March 3, (weekdays only) the train will take passengers from Tacoma and Kent to Seattle. Both rail lines will arrive in Seattle at the King Street Station at 4th and Jackson. Bus service in downtown Seattle's "Ride Free Area" includes the Metro bus tunnel's International District Station, just across the street. A free Metro Shuttle from the train station to downtown also will be available.

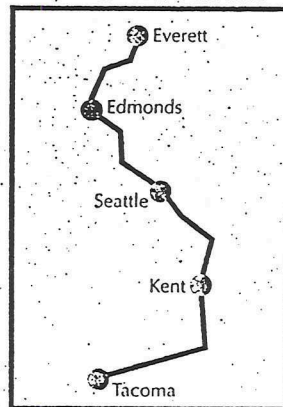
There is limited parking at all the train stations: off of Smith in Everett, at the Amtrak station in Edmonds, the Saturday Market in Kent, or at the Amtrak station in Tacoma. Additional parking and free shuttle service is listed below.

### In Snohomish County

To get to the Everett station, park free at Marysville Park-and-Ride #2 (Exit 199 from Interstate 5) and take the free Community Transit Shuttle. The temporary rail station is at Pacific Avenue at Smith Street, next to Eagle Hardware. Or transfer from a local bus to a free Everett Transit

Shuttle at the Everett Transit Center at Hoyt and Hewitt Avenues. Catch the train in Edmonds at the Amtrak Station. Park there or at the Edmonds Park-and-Ride lot at 213th Place SW and 72nd Avenue W, where Community Transit will pick you up and take you to the station for free.

### TryRail Commuter Demo Route



### In Pierce & King Counties

In Tacoma, you can catch the train at the Amtrak station. Pierce Transit will transport train passengers who park in the Seattle Express lots at Lot G at the Tacoma Dome and the I-705 Park-and-Ride lots.

In Kent, Metro buses will transport you from the Kent Transit Center or from the Auburn & Meridian Park-and-Rides. You can also park at the Saturday Market, just a block away. The station is between Meeker and Smith Streets.

### Sonics Games

For Sonics games, catch the train at the King Street Station in Seattle or the Amtrak Station in Kent. In Everett, park at the temporary Pacific and Smith station and in Edmonds at the Amtrak station. Walk to the Tacoma Dome from the platform at Puyallup Avenue at E-F streets, or about 3 blocks. More parking is listed above. The games on Feb. 20, 22, 24 and 27 will only have service from Seattle & Kent, not Everett. Passengers will be charged \$10 for the round trip or \$5 from Kent. Order your tickets from TicketMaster at 628-0888.

The Victoria Clipper sails from Seattle's Pier 69 to Sonics Tacoma games. Call 448-5000 for more information. Gray Line of Seattle offers express Sonics motorcoach service from 8 locations throughout greater Seattle. Call 626-5208 for reservations.

### For More Info

Call your local transit agency, listed below, to find out more information about how to catch the buses and trains in your county.

#### King County

24-hour Metro Rider Information  
553-3000 or 1-800-542-7876

#### Pierce County

Pierce Transit Customer Service  
581-8000 or 1-800-542-7876

#### Snohomish County

Community Transit & Everett Transit  
353-RIDE or 1-800-562-1375

For information on the RTA's Regional Transit System Proposal and this TryRail Demo, call 1-800-201-4900.

### Special Trips

Ten or more excursions to destinations in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties are being planned for weekends and a few limited weekdays in February and March. Details are still being finalized, but tours should offer something for everyone. Call 1-800-201-4900 for the latest schedule and look for ads in your local newspaper.



# Try the train for fun.

## And it's free

In addition to the commuter and Sonics services, **TRY RAIL** is offering ten days of special trips in February and March, giving you a chance to test ride a commuter train. Trains will take you to one of the destinations listed below, or you can just ride the train for fun! The following is a list of timetables and descriptions for each trip. Call 1-800-201-4900 for more information.

### Everett and Edmonds

The railroad tracks run along the Puget Sound shoreline, providing spectacular views from both levels of our commuter cars. You might see marine mammals, eagles and other wildlife. You can stop for lunch at one of the waterfront restaurants in Edmonds and browse in nearby galleries and shops. Or stop for lunch in Everett and explore downtown.

### Seattle

**TRY RAIL** stops at King Street Station, within walking distance of Pioneer Square, the International District and downtown. Visit Pioneer Square galleries, have dim sum at a Chinese restaurant, take a free bus downtown for shopping or visit waterfront attractions such as the aquarium.

### Kent and Tacoma

To the south, enjoy the views of the Green River and Puyallup River valleys. Kent offers downtown shopping with a small town flavor, all within walking distance. Downtown Tacoma is alive with the arts — the Tacoma Art Museum, renovated Union Station, and Broadway Theater District galleries. And of course, don't forget the Tacoma Dome.

## Special events

### February 20 — Presidents' Day

This is your chance to ride from Tacoma to Everett. Stop and shop Presidents' Day sales in Kent, Seattle or Edmonds. Get some great ideas at the annual Seattle Home Show at the Kingdome. Or just stay on the train and check out the scenery.

Tacoma	Kent	Seattle	Edmonds	Everett
Northbound —		Arrives		
9:20 a.m.	9:58 a.m.	10:34 a.m.	11:49 a.m.	12:28 p.m.
		Departs		
		11:10 a.m.		
Everett	Edmonds	Seattle	Kent	Tacoma
Southbound —		Arrives		
12:45 p.m.	1:14 p.m.	1:54 p.m.	2:46 p.m.	3:31 p.m.
		Departs		
		2:15 p.m.		

### February 25 and 26 — Art Express

Enjoy jazz, bluegrass and comedians on the train, presented by Art Access. Tour the galleries in Seattle and Tacoma. Several special events are happening this weekend: Wintergrass, a midwinter bluegrass festival in Tacoma; the Fat Tuesday celebration in Pioneer Square; the Tacoma Art Museum's Winter Arts Festival (Sunday); the Seattle Home Show at the Kingdome; and the Northwest Flower and Garden Show at the Washington State Convention Center. You'll find details about each event on the train.

Tacoma	Kent	Seattle
Northbound —		
10:30 a.m.	11:08 a.m.	11:44 a.m.
5:50 p.m.	6:28 p.m.	7:04 p.m.
Seattle	Kent	Tacoma
Southbound —		
12:10 p.m.	12:41 p.m.	1:26 p.m.
8:00 p.m.	8:31 p.m.	9:16 p.m.

Continued on back

## March 8, 9, 10 — Weekday trips

Take a short round trip on a weekday. These rides are ideal for civic groups, schools — or even business meetings.

March 8	Seattle	Kent	Tacoma
Southbound —			
	7:25 a.m.	7:54 a.m.	8:51 a.m.
Northbound —			
	9:00 a.m.	9:48 a.m.	10:24 a.m.
March 9	Seattle	Edmonds	Everett
Northbound —			
	11:45 a.m.	12:24 p.m.	1:03 p.m.
Southbound —			
	1:15 p.m.	1:44 p.m.	2:33 p.m.
March 10	Seattle	Kent	Tacoma
Southbound —			
	11:35 a.m.	12:04 p.m.	12:47 p.m.
Northbound —			
	1:00 p.m.	1:34 p.m.	2:10 p.m.

## Saturday, March 4 and 11 — South Puget Sound

Ride **TRY RAIL** between Seattle and Tacoma. Two round trips will allow time to stop over in Seattle, Kent or Tacoma, where you can catch the Tacoma Dome's Antique Show March 11. Or visit Seattle's Pike Place Market. Pierce Transit's hourly Seattle Express provides an additional travel option. Call (206) 581-8000 for details.

Seattle	Kent	Tacoma
Southbound —		
9:35 a.m.	10:04 a.m.	10:47 a.m.
1:05 p.m.	1:34 p.m.	2:17 p.m.
Tacoma	Kent	Seattle
Northbound —		
11:10 a.m.	11:46 a.m.	12:22 p.m.
2:30 p.m.	3:06 p.m.	3:42 p.m.

## Sunday, March 5 and 12 — North Puget Sound

Take your family to see spectacular scenery along the Puget Sound shoreline. Two round trips will allow time to have lunch and browse in Edmonds or Everett, or take the passenger ferry from Edmonds to Kingston.

Seattle	Edmonds	Everett
Northbound —		
9:45 a.m.	10:29 a.m.	11:08 a.m.
12:50 p.m.	1:34 p.m.	2:13 p.m.
Everett	Edmonds	Seattle
Southbound —		
11:20 a.m.	11:49 a.m.	12:38 p.m.
2:25 p.m.	2:54 p.m.	3:43 p.m.

## Train stations

Look for the **TRY RAIL** signs in five communities: Everett (Pacific Avenue at Smith Street, near Eagle Hardware), Edmonds (at the Amtrak station), Seattle (King Street Station, Fourth and Jackson), Kent (on the Burlington Northern tracks between Meeker and Smith Streets — park at the Saturday Market lot) and in Tacoma (at the Amtrak Station).

## TRY RAIL

The Regional Transit Authority invites you along as it evaluates commuter rail operations and leased train equipment. These trips are part of a limited demonstration of commuter train service in Pierce, King and Snohomish counties, and will not mirror the more frequent service that could be provided by the RTA if voters approve funding for the first phase of a regional transit system March 14. The RTA's proposed commuter rail line would link 17 communities throughout King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. Commuter rail would be part of a larger system that includes buses and light rail vehicles.

For more information, call 1-800-201-4900.



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## Appendix 4 — *TRY RAIL!* ridership reports

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# Try Rail Ridership - Week 1

Everett-Edmonds-Seattle

	AM			PM			Daily Total
	<u>Everett</u>	<u>Edmonds</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Seattle</u>	<u>Edmonds</u>	<u>Tacoma</u>	
<b>Day 1</b>							
6:00 AM	26	45	71	4:10 PM	137	?	137
7:00 AM	?	?	107	5:30 PM	66	?	66
AM Total			178	PM Total		203	381
<b>Day 2</b>							
6:00 AM	25	44	69	4:10 PM	137	?	137
7:00 AM	30	51	81	5:30 PM	77	?	77
AM Total			150	PM Total		214	364
<b>Day 3</b>							
6:00 AM	30	38	68	4:10 PM	183	?	183
7:00 AM	52	67	119	5:30 PM	78	?	78
AM Total			187	PM Total		261	448
<b>Day 4</b>							
6:00 AM	25	71	96	4:10 PM	173	13	186
7:00 AM	88	64	152	5:30 PM	104	?	104
AM Total			248	PM Total		290	538
<b>Day 5</b>							
6:00 AM	24	75	99	4:10 PM	271	14	285
7:00 AM	147	209	256	5:30 PM	146	?	146
AM Total			355	PM Total		431	786
<b>Boardings Week 1</b>							2517

# Try Rail Ridership - Week 2

Everett-Edmonds-Seattle

		<u>Everett</u>	<u>AM Edmonds</u>	<u>Total</u>		<u>Seattle</u>	<u>PM Edmonds</u>	<u>Tacoma</u>	<u>Daily Total</u>	<u>Previous Week</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
<b>Day 6</b>												
	6:00 AM	35	76	111	4:10 PM	182	17	199				
	7:00 AM	125	75	200	5:30 PM	134	1	135				
	<b>AM Total</b>			<b>311</b>	<b>PM Total</b>			<b>334</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Day 7</b>												
	6:00 AM	34	65	99	4:10 PM	192	7	199				
	7:00 AM	116	87	203	5:30 PM	138	1	139				
	<b>AM Total</b>			<b>302</b>	<b>PM Total</b>			<b>338</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>Day 8</b>												
	6:00 AM	38	75	113	4:10 PM	288	20	308				
	7:00 AM	146	110	256	5:30 PM	151	3	154				
	<b>AM Total</b>			<b>369</b>	<b>PM Total</b>			<b>462</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Day 9</b>												
	6:00 AM	39	101	140	4:10 PM	382	47	429				
	7:00 AM	189	126	315	5:30 PM	187	4	191				
	<b>AM Total</b>			<b>455</b>	<b>PM Total</b>			<b>620</b>	<b>1075</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Day 10</b>												
	6:00 AM	49	82	131	4:10 PM	522	47	569				
	7:00 AM	282	197	479	5:30 PM	252	4	256				
	<b>AM Total</b>			<b>610</b>	<b>PM Total</b>			<b>825</b>	<b>1435</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Total Boardings, Week 2</b>									<b>4626</b>	<b>2517</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>84%</b>



# Try Rail Ridership - Week 3

Everett-Edmonds-Seattle

								Daily Total	Same Day Everett- Edmonds Service
AM			PM						
	<u>Tacoma</u>	<u>Kent</u>	<u>Total</u>		<u>Seattle</u>	<u>Kent</u>	<u>Total</u>		
Day 11									
	6:00 AM	49	76	125	4:30PM	190	12	202	
	7:00 AM	98	67	165	5:30 PM	148	7	155	
	AM Total			290	PM Total			357	
								647	364
Day 12									
	6:00 AM	52	93	145	4:30PM	279	8	287	
	7:00 AM	103	124	227	5:30 PM	275	35	310	
	AM Total			372	PM Total			597	
								969	448
Day 13									
	6:00 AM	67	141	208	4:30PM	308	22	330	
	7:00 AM	122	185	307	5:30 PM	224		224	
	AM Total				PM Total			554	
								1069	538
Day 14									
	6:00 AM	70	142	212	4:30PM	360	16	376	
	7:00 AM	152	194	346	5:30 PM	478		478	
	AM Total			558	PM Total			854	
								1412	768
Total Boardings, Week 3								4097	2517

# Try Rail Ridership - Week 4

Everett-Edmonds-Seattle

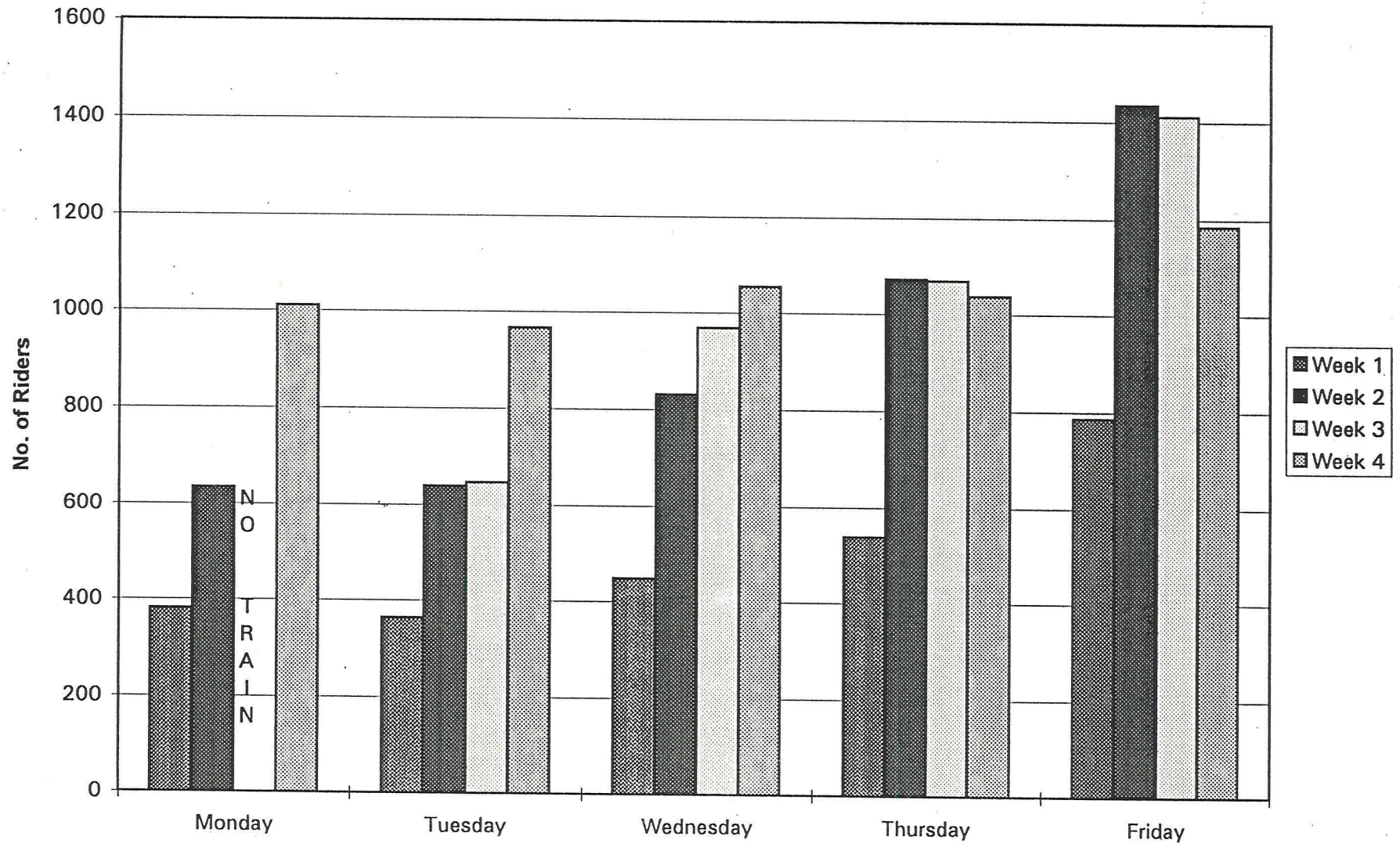
									Daily Total	Same Day Previous Week	Change	% Change
		AM Tacoma	Kent	Total		PM Seattle	Kent	Total				
<b>Day 15</b>												
	6:00 AM	54	127	181		4:30PM	243	13	256			
	7:00 AM	118	138	256		5:30 PM	349	0	349			
	AM Total			405		PM Total		605				
									1010		No Comparable Data	
<b>Day 16</b>												
	6:00 AM	66	128	194		4:30PM	283	5	288			
	7:00 AM	137	138	275		5:30 PM	210	0	210			
	AM Total			469		PM Total		498				
									967	647	320	49%
<b>Day 17</b>												
	6:00 AM	63	148			4:30PM	313	13	326			
	7:00 AM	148	131			5:30 PM	238	0	238			
	AM Total			490		PM Total		564				
									1054	969	85	9%
<b>Day 18</b>												
	6:00 AM	65	137	202		4:30PM	300	0	300			
	7:00 AM	151	146	297		5:30 PM	239	0	239			
	AM Total			499		PM Total		539				
									1038	1038	1038	-3%
<b>Day 19</b>												
	6:00 AM	71	152			4:30PM		342				
	7:00 AM	153	187			5:30 PM		280				
	AM Total			563		PM Total		622				
									1185	1412	-227	-16%
<b>Total Boardings, Week 4</b>									<b>5254</b>	<b>4097</b>	<b>1157</b>	<b>28%</b>



## Try Rail Ridership - Excursions

2/20 (President's Day)			Tacoma	Kent	Seattle	Edmonds	Everett	Total	Daily Total
	Northbound		870	600	500	400	50	2420	
	Southbound		650	120	320	100	970	2160	
2/25 (Art Express)			Tacoma	Kent	Seattle	Kent		Total	4590
	10:30AM		1382	500	1250	121		3253	
	5:50PM		621	98	588	30		1337	
2/26 (Art Express)			Tacoma	Kent	Seattle	Kent		Total	4353
	10:30AM		1193	441	1437	91		3162	
	5:50PM		600	50	521	20		1191	
Weekday Excursions Trips			Seattle	Kent	Auburn	Puyallup	Tacoma	Total	790
	March 8th		48	400	202	18	122	790	
			Seattle	Edmonds	Everett	Edmonds		Total	
	March 9th		1205	811	1245	394		3655	3655
			Seattle	Kent	Tacoma	Kent		Total	3738
	March 10th		994	688	1704	352		3738	
South Puget Sound				Seattle	Kent	Tacoma	Kent	Total	
	March 4th	9:35AM		166	215	1094	1215	2690	5165
		1:05PM		945	939	393	198	2475	
	March 11th	9:35AM		342	443	1798	371	2954	6418
		1:05PM		1592	718	750	404	3464	
North Puget Sound				Seattle	Edmonds	Everett	Edmonds	Total	6650
	March 5th	9:45AM		685	654	960	1019	3318	
		12:50PM		1122	951	630	629	3332	
	March 12th	9:45AM		1625	689	562	875	3751	8033
		12:50PM		1958	985	367	972	4282	

## TRY RAIL RIDERSHIP





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## Appendix 5 — *TRY RAIL!* Ambassadors

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Vonie Polomis	Marcia Walker	Carolyn Cann-Healy
Erika Peterson	Kathy Hall	Johnathan Jackson
Tim-Elvis Healy	Val Batey	David Beal
Sue Brennan	Madeline Clemann	Barbara Dougherty
Christy Engan	Irene Fjaerstad	Denny Fleenor
Melissa Flores	Jamie Gorasht	Chuck Kirchner
Gregg Schweers	Judy Yuen	Mike Wold
Barbara Gilliland	Jeff Munnoch	Bob White
Ken Stanley	Marie Keister	John Hubbard
Patty Anderson	Bob Bartlett	Jeff Grendahl
Krista Sheehy	Dave Anderson	Lani Urtacho
Donna Burgner	Christopher Clifford	Joan Cooper
John Darragh	Kate Erickson	Darrell Gatchel
Joseph Glourty	Jannice Hanson	Joe Harrison
Kathleen Hartson	Steve Jefferies	Sandy Johnson
Brenda Jones	Tina Lee	Lenny Mykland
Fred Nelson	Joan O'Brien	George Patton
Francis Rankos	Inez Scotland	Jeff Scott
Cheryl Sloan	Virginia Stevens	Sharon Storkman
Barb Tilotta	Jerry Lindsaya	Drew Robinson
Diane Hampton	David Lester	Ovita Bonadie
Tutti Compton	Diane Hildebrand	Carl Jackson
Harry Kelly	Mel LaBoyne	Mary Lamar-Likes
Art Nelson	Mark Peterson	Jeffiner Peyton
Doris Roberts	Keith Sherry	Lisa Toby
Ruth Mortenson	Caroline Edwards	Elisa Clovis
Chiquita Divens	Marlene Sprague	Barbara Stenson
Howard Roseman	Ira Saceroff	Robert Cisneros
Mark Garcia	Joseph Glowitz	Micheal Moore
Roger Mumm	Art Nelson	Pete Newman
Steve Thompson	Dennis Fait	Nila Hamilton
Loren Harrigstad	Warren Wing	